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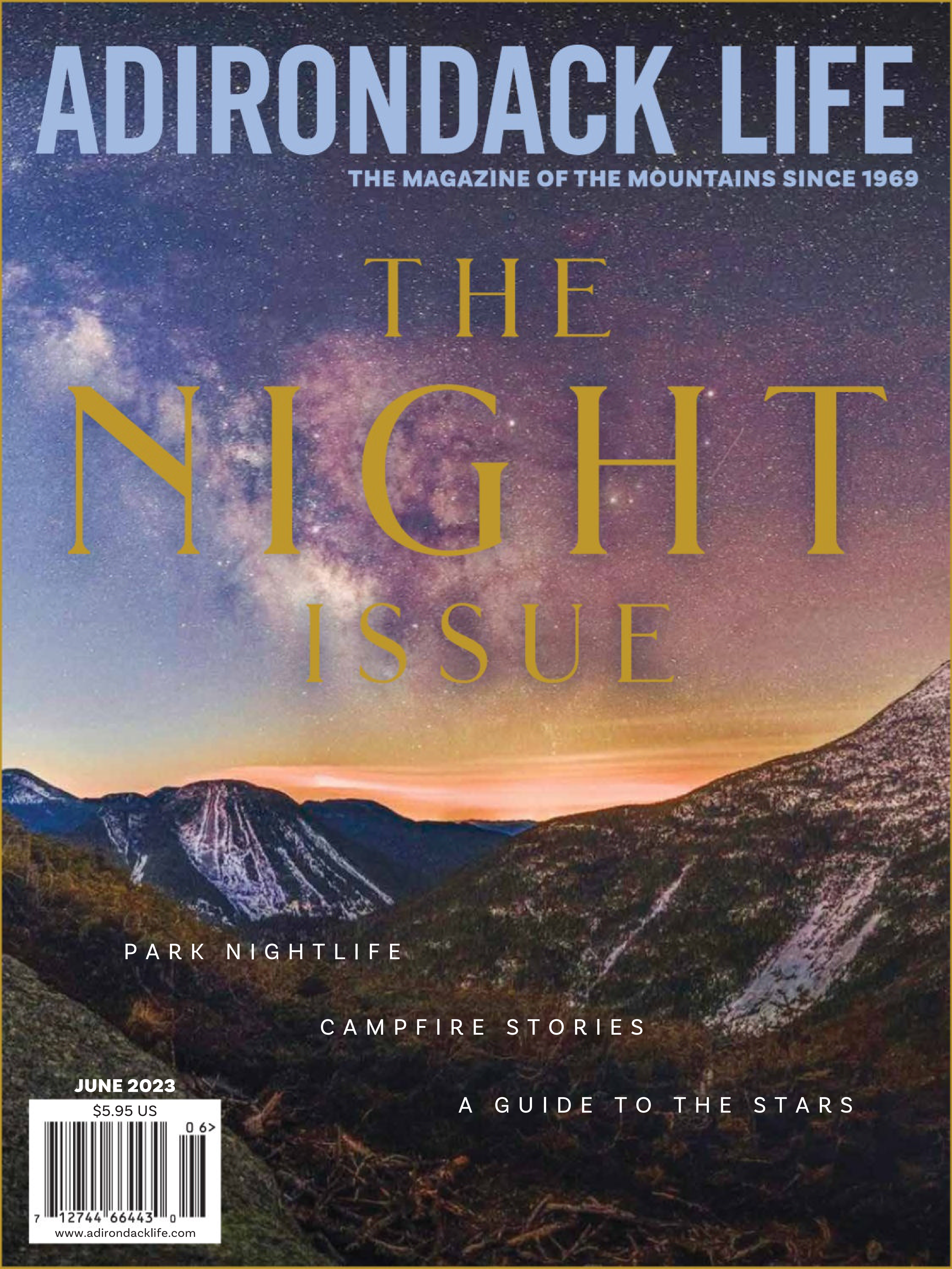

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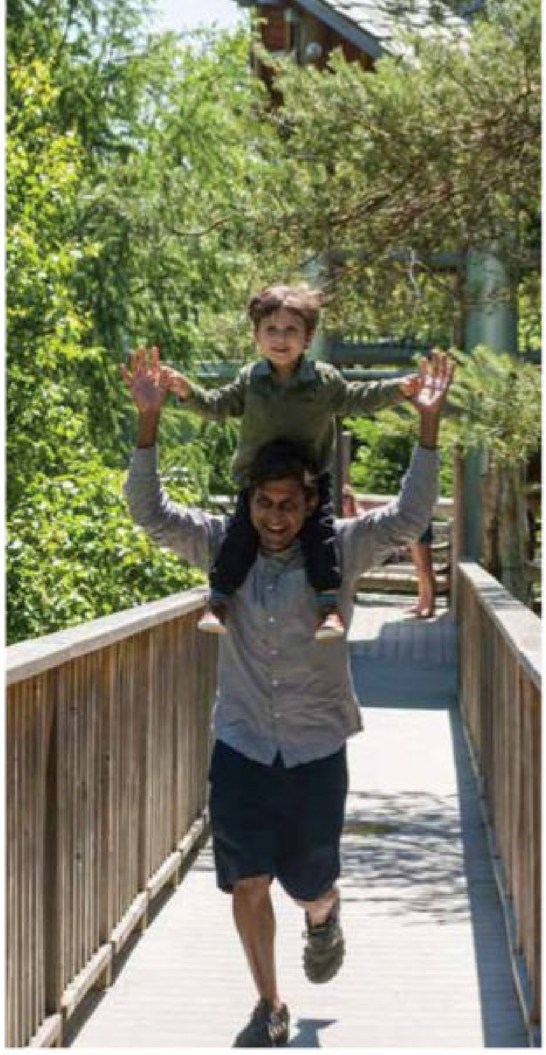

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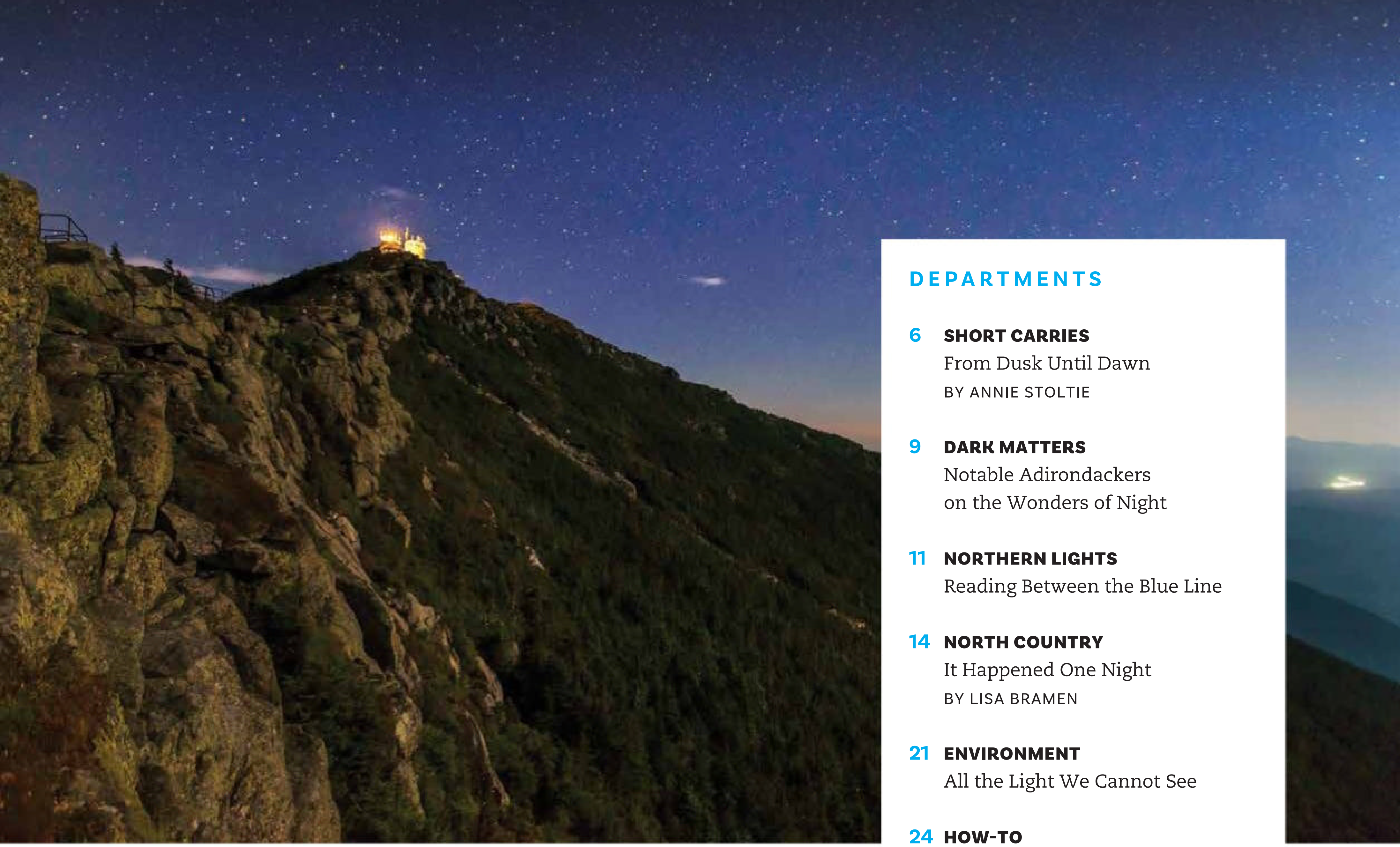

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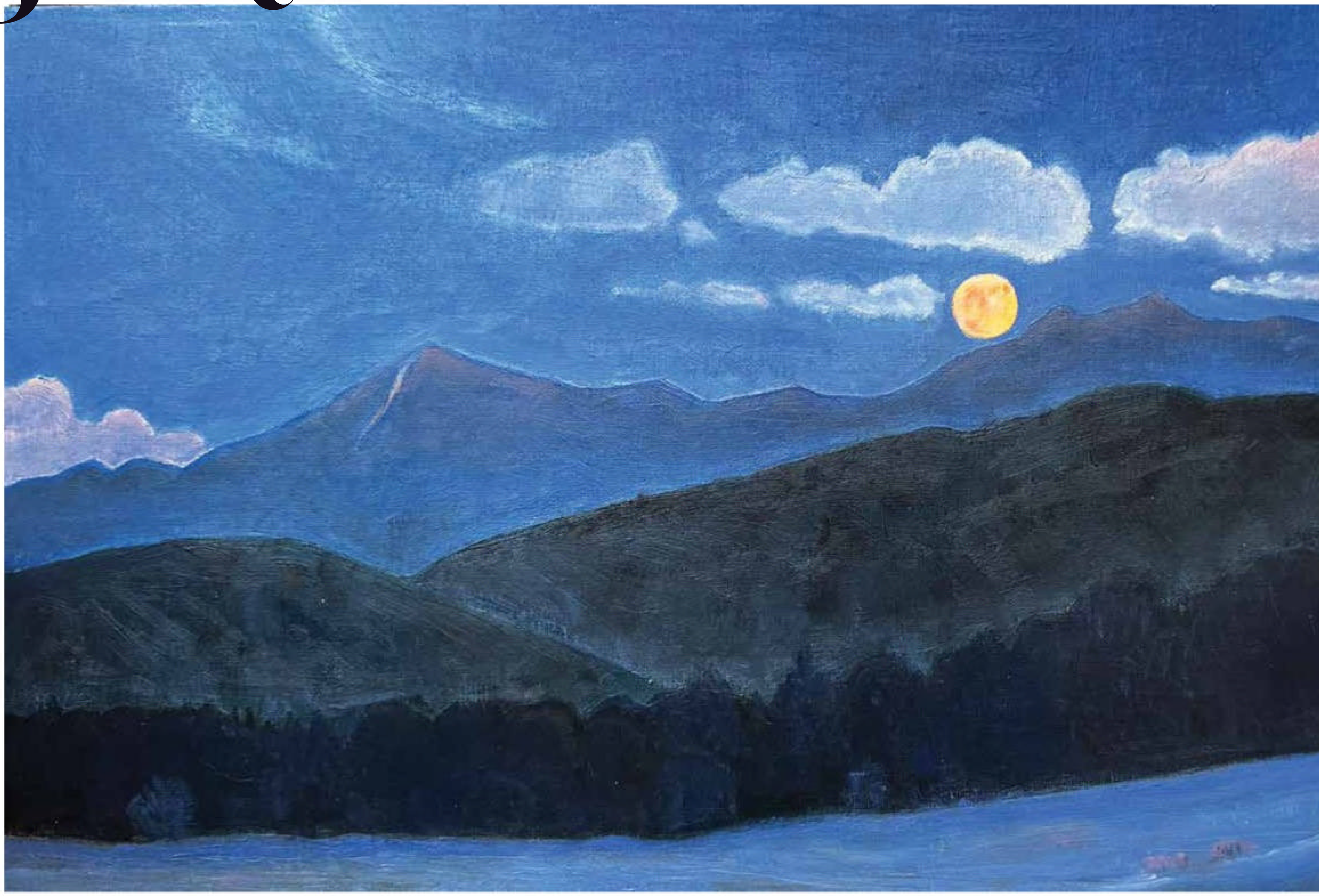


From Dusk Until Dawn

Why the dark side of the Adirondacks deserves our recognition

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

***Solstice Moon*, oil on linen, 10x20, by Sandra Hildreth.**

Like snow, night blankets the landscape. When the sun goes down in my little hamlet, houses, no matter how simple or grand, look the same. You can't see the state of front yards or who drives what.

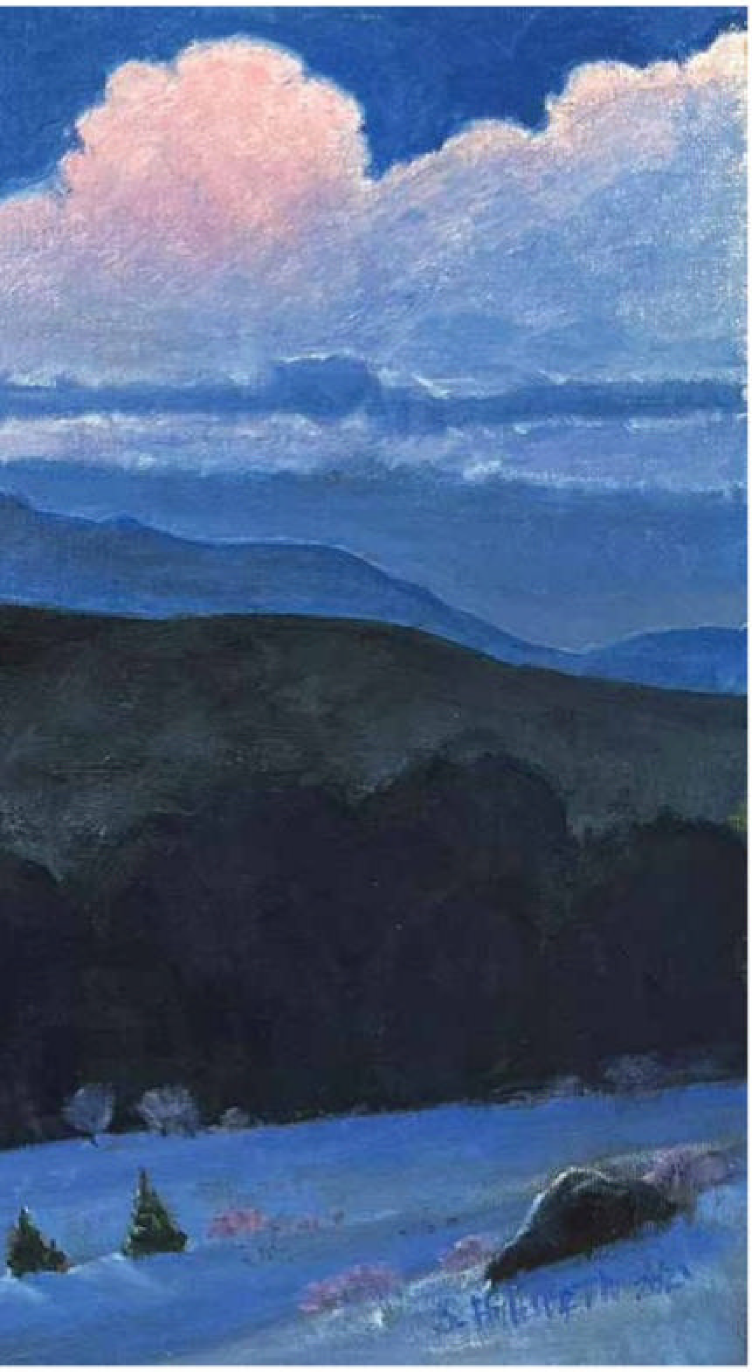
In the dark my worries howl. That's when I look up. I've done it plenty with friends and family around a campfire, but in the backyard at four a.m., alone with my dog circling me like a satellite, nothing compares. All those stars and the bigness and possibilities of the universe swallow my stress.

In more than a half-century of *Adirondack Life* magazine there's never been an issue dedicated to what happens from dusk until dawn. We've overlooked a side of Adirondack life that deserves recognition.

There's our stunning celestial show, thanks to minimal light pollution. That darkness supports our nocturnal creatures, like the bats who zigzag overhead, feasting on pests that threaten our forests, and the antennaed *Lampyridae,* who make Adirondack fields sparkle with seductive displays of bioluminescence.

Nighttime conjures stories of the spooky and supernatural. In the Adirondacks we've got enough tales to tell long

PAINTING FROM SANDRA HILDRETH



after the campfire goes out.

Hikers, in the quest for summits all to themselves, are embracing the night. And throughout history, dark skies have been salve and salvation: enslaved people relied on them to maneuver through our landscape as they made their way to freedom.

Our nights inspire poets and philosophers, photographers and musicians. Sandra Hildreth, a Saranac Lake–based artist, says it's a time of "mystery." She painted the above, with the silhouettes of McKenzie and Moose Mountains. It started as a nocturne—a work that portrays a scene after the sun goes down—captured en plein air near the Harrietstown Cemetery. If you look closely, says Hildreth, "there's really not much in a landscape, day or night, that's truly black. Night is made up of color."

It is. And so much more.

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Dark Matters

Notable Adirondackers on the wonders of night

ANDREA BARRETT

Our backyard adjoins a big chunk of woods with a CATS trail running through it, and we often hear coyotes late at night: sometimes from deep in the woods, sometimes quite close to the house. During the day, we see their signs everywhere but almost never glimpse them. We got a little closer this past Thanksgiving, though. Along with five friends we bundled up, donned our headlamps, and went for a little post-dinner night walk. We were only a short way down the trail, our dog leading the way and the humans strung out in a line behind her, when coyotes began howling all around us. We felt surrounded (we probably weren't). The dog scooted back and quivered between my legs and the humans drew together into a little clump. Not scared, exactly—but intensely alert, astonished by their wild calls, and freshly aware of how much our world intrudes on theirs. By the time we moved on, they were gone.

Barrett, a MacArthur Fellow, is author of Ship Fever, Servants of the Map, The Air We Breathe *and* Natural History. *She lives in Westport.*

JOHN VAN ALSTINE

Maybe 20 years ago, around Halloween, we experienced a northern lights display. Crazy green undulating waves filled the sky. There were also strange pyramid-like formations that seemed to expand and grow. They were awe-inspiring.

Van Alstine is a sculptor, profiled in the new book American Vistas: The Life and Art of John Van Alstine. *He lives in Wells.*

MIKE CARR

On a winter night when I crossed the park's southwestern boundary on a flight to Lake Placid from Hamilton, New York, it was as if someone had abruptly switched off the lights below. From the Cessna's cockpit, it felt as if I was flying over an ocean. Making my way northeast, I remember a line of snowmobile headlights racing over an ice-covered Raquette Lake, briefly reconnecting me to humanity before the landscape went dark again. On the faraway horizon, flickers of light outlined the shape of the Adirondack Park, reminding me how special this place is.

Carr is executive director of the Adirondack Land Trust. He lives in Keene.

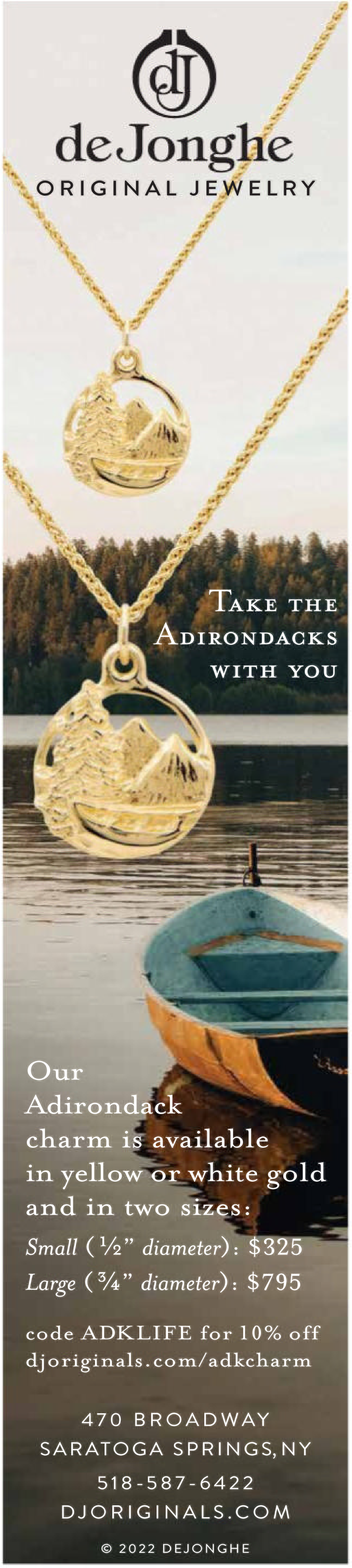
KRISTIN KIMBALL

One full moon August night, when I was heavily pregnant with our second child, our neighbor Ron called to tell us our draft horses were loose and had wandered onto the road. We had nine draft horses back then, weighing a ton each. Even a very pregnant person will hustle when they get a call like that. I hiked up my maternity pants and ran to the field, while Mark, my husband, went to the barn to get halters and lead ropes.

I could see all nine of them clearly in the moonlight. They had left the road by then and found the best patch of clover between two sections of our vegetable fields, and they had their heads down, grazing quickly and with purpose, like children bolting some forbidden sugar cereal. The clover was thick and almost to my knees, and walking to them was like wading in a shallow green sea, the intoxicating smell of clover rising up all around me. The pair of dappled gray Percherons, the youngest of the herd, lifted their heads, curious, and came to us, not yet wise to the connection between us and the loss of their newfound freedom. The others were older, craftier, and harder to catch, and it took us nearly until dawn to do it.

It was not the way I would have chosen to spend the night, but I wasn't sorry it happened. How else would I ever have known how a herd of horses looks casting moonshadows into clover that is silver with dew? I can still see it perfectly when I close my eyes, and the child I was pregnant with is 12 years old now, a horse-crazy girl.

Kimball is co-founder of Essex Farm and author of The Dirty Life *and* Good Husbandry. *She lives in Essex.* ▲



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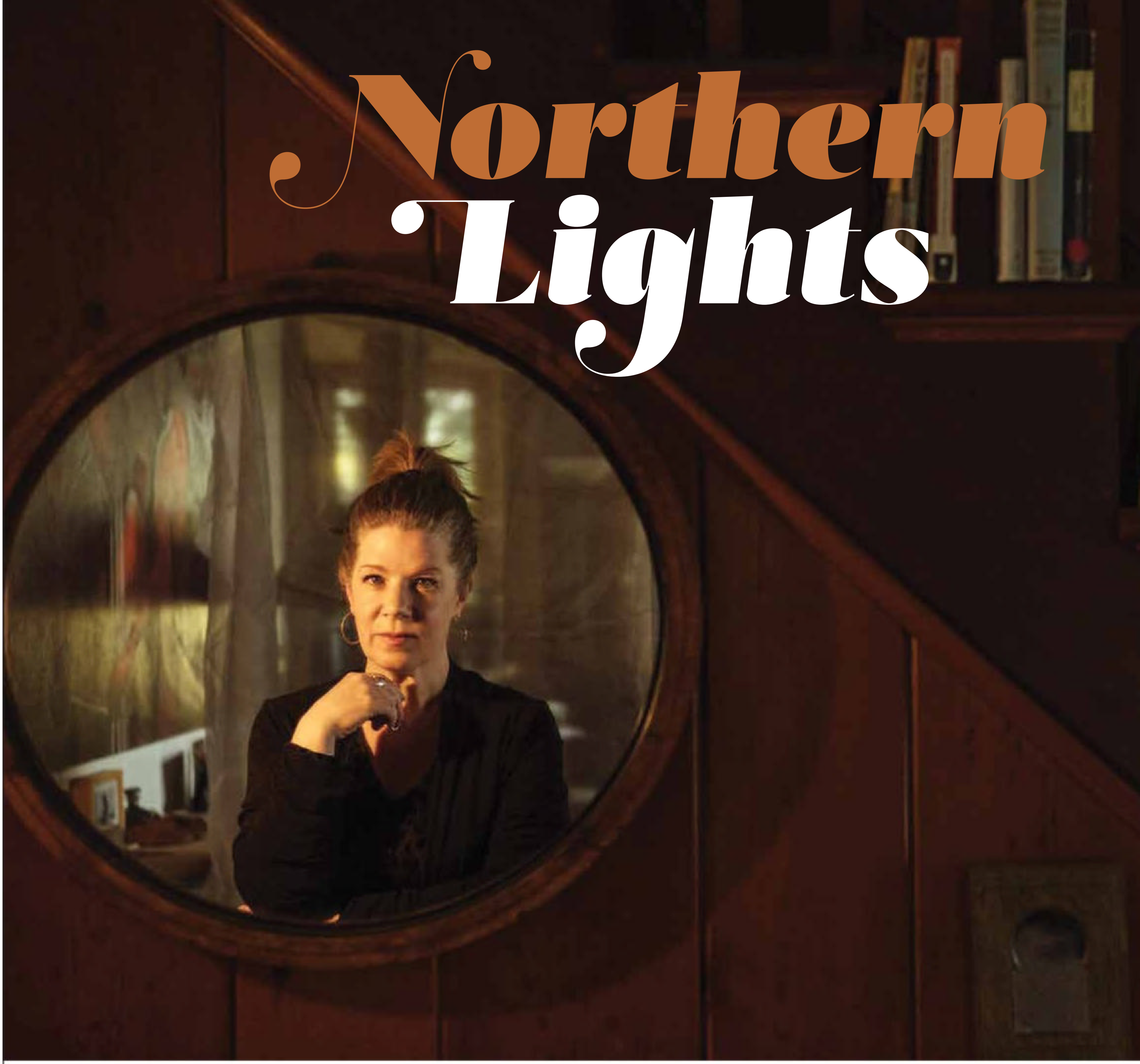


DAR WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Folk singer-songwriter Dar Williams.

A Little Night Music

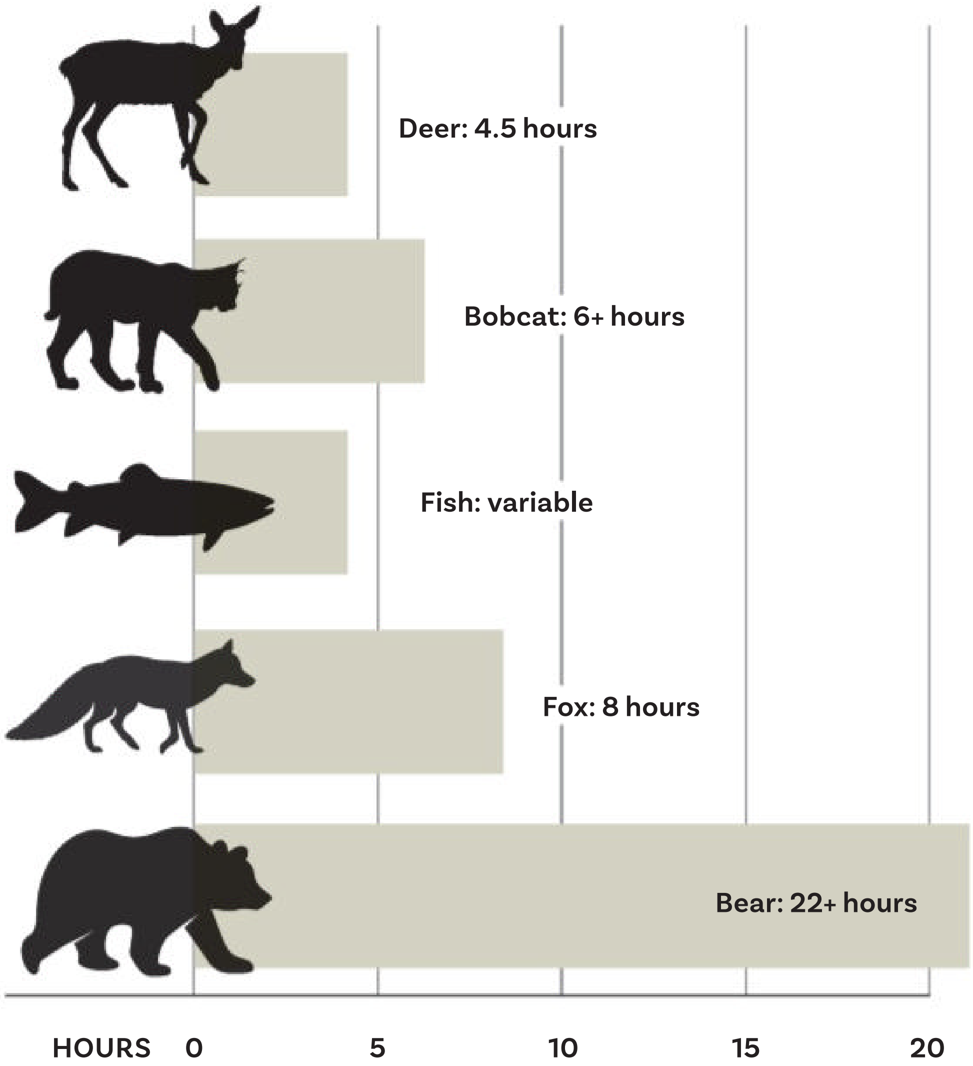
Cast off your winter blues at this spring's lineup of concerts around the Adirondack Park: On May 5, singer-songwriter Dar Williams brings her blend of folk and pop to the Lake Placid Center for the Arts (lakeplacidarts.org). Roots reggae takes the stage at the Waterhole (saranaclakewaterhole.com), in Saranac Lake, on May 20, with Hudson Valley outfit The Big Takeover. Vermont jam rockers Twiddle and friends return to Lake George's Charles R. Wood Park (festivalcommons.com) for the Memorial Meltdown, May 27 and 28, before going on "indefinite hiatus." The Whallonsburg Grange (thegrangehall.info) hosts folk duo The Rough and Tumble on June 3. And North Creek goes country June 29 with Saratoga Springs band Grit N' Whiskey at the Tannery Pond Center (tannerypond.org).

Grow a Moon Garden

Dedicate a space in your home landscape for evening enjoyment by planting night-blooming flowers that perfume the air or those with white blossoms that glow in the moonlight. Try evening primrose (*Oenethera biennis*) or foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), both native to the Adirondacks.

The Sleep-o-Meter

Rest is essential for all living creatures, but the sleep habits of Adirondack fauna depend on both biological need and environmental considerations: While foxes average a sensible eight or more hours of slumber per day, predator-wary deer are lucky to squeeze in four-and-a-half cumulative hours of catnaps. As for our resident felines, bobcats doze in two-to-three-hour stints several times per day, adjusting as needed to seasonal hunting conditions. Even fish, whose lack of eyelids would seem to preclude getting shuteye, need their downtime—freshwater fish such as brook trout often find a quiet spot out of the current to catch some aquatic Zs; how long depends on the species and stage of life. The sultans of slumber, of course, are black bears, who may snooze some 22 hours a day in the period leading up to hibernation.



FLOWER PHOTOGRAPHS AND ANIMAL SILHOUETTES FROM SHUTTERSTOCK. COCKTAIL PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

Space Taste

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED what the Milky Way—the celestial one, not the confection—would smell and taste like? Whiteface Lodge bartender Andrei Gherasoiu has. The recent SUNY-ESF grad concocted The Center of the Galaxy in homage to astronomers' discovery of the presence of methyl formate, a chemical that helps flavor raspberries and rum, in dust clouds near the center of the Milky Way. Though not on the official bar menu in the lodge's Peak 47 lounge, Gherasoiu suggests it to patrons who want something a little fruity but not overly sweet.

The Center of the Galaxy

INGREDIENTS

1 shot each of:
- Spiced rum
- St. Germain elderflower liqueur
- Passionfruit liqueur or Grand Marnier
- Chambord

Dash of orange bitters

DIRECTIONS

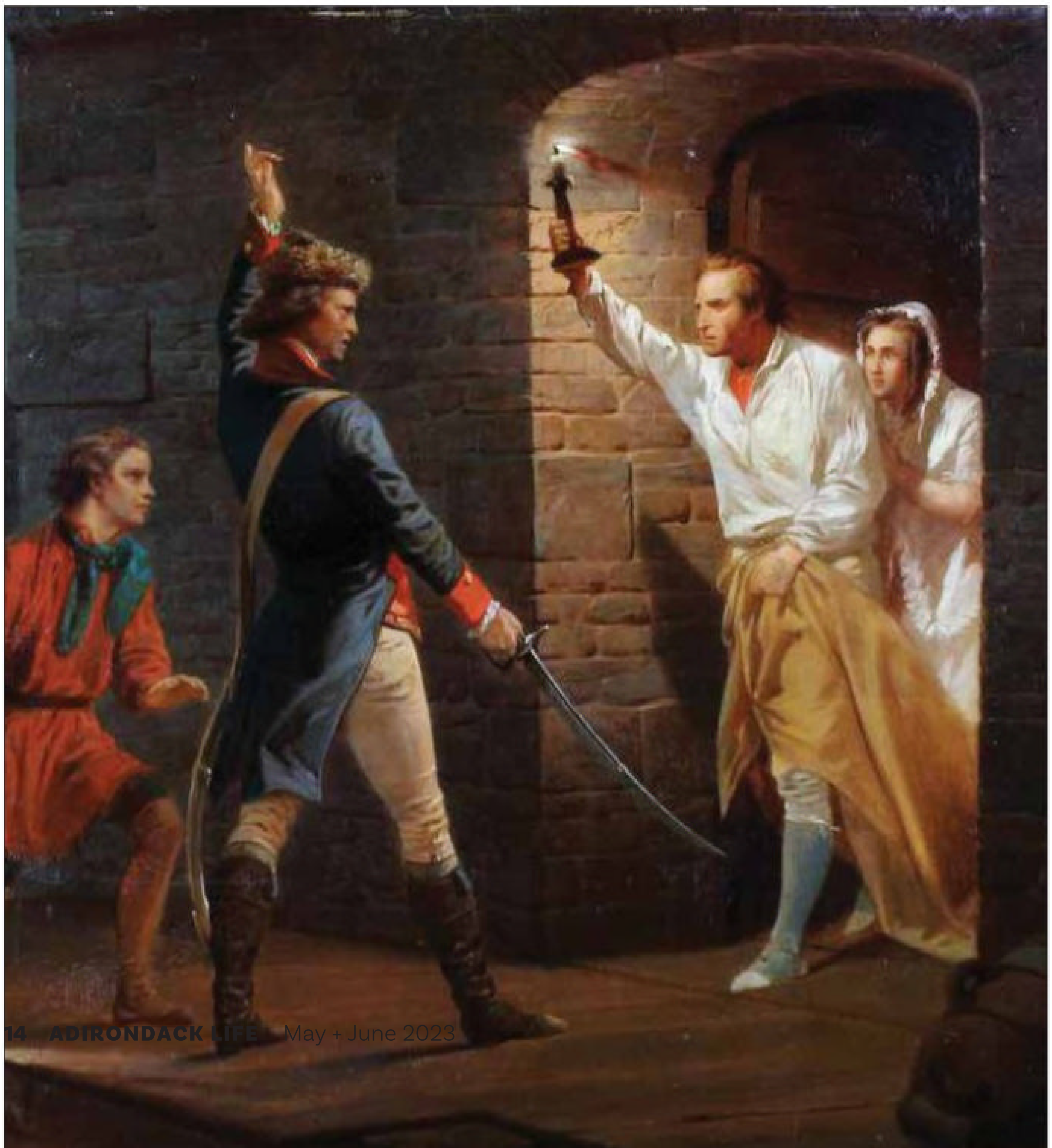
Mix ingredients with ice in a cocktail shaker; shake and serve over ice. Garnish with a slice of lime.

It Happened One Night

A timeline of notable nocturnal Adirondack events

BY LISA BRAMEN

Some of the most consequential days in Adirondack history weren't days at all. From the 1775 predawn raid of Fort Ticonderoga to the Dannemora prison break in 2015, deeds both dastardly and daring have occurred in the dead of night.



***Capture of Fort Ticonderoga*, attributed to Alonzo Chappel, depicts Ethan Allen rousing the British commander from bed.**

PAINTING FROM THE FORT TICONDEROGA MUSEUM COLLECTION

1775: TAKING OFFENSE

Though his name would later become synonymous with treason, Benedict Arnold started out as a hero for the cause of American independence. With fellow patriot Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, Arnold staged a late-night raid on Fort Ticonderoga that was the first American offensive victory of the Revolutionary War.

Shortly before midnight on May 9, 1775, at least 150 men massed on the Vermont shore of Lake Champlain, preparing to launch their attack by water. They only had enough boats to transport fewer than 100 of them at once. By the time the first flotilla neared the fort it was close to dawn and Allen and Arnold decided the element of surprise trumped manpower.

In any case, only 44 British soldiers and their families were stationed at Fort Ti—and they apparently weren't keen to defend it to the death. The commander surrendered without a scuffle.

But Arnold, who had only grudgingly agreed to share command with Allen, was disgusted by Allen's general lack of discipline and failure to keep his men in order after the capture. His grievances only grew over the next few years, leading him to eventually switch loyalties and help the British capture West Point. For his treachery, Arnold reportedly received payment of 5,000 pounds—and a name that will forever live in infamy.

A 19th-century depiction of the capture, at left, leaves Arnold out entirely.

1856: TRAGEDY ON THE AUSABLE

Floods on the Ausable River are not unusual, but none exacted as heavy a toll as the deluge that began the evening of September 30, 1856.

According to an article in the *Plattsburgh Republican*, "the rain fell in a continued sheet for about three hours," causing the river to rapidly overflow. A dam burst in Keeseville, sweeping away sawmills on both sides of the Ausable. Gristmills, a nail factory, barns, forges, bridges and other seemingly sturdy structures were dashed to bits. Even worse was the loss of life; at least nine people drowned.

In Au Sable Forks, the article continued, "there were several persons in the stone boarding-house (a two and a half story building) when, in the midnight darkness, it was suddenly surrounded by the violent flood, undermined, and tumbled to pieces.—The woman who kept the house, her two children, two servant girls, and a man of the name of Louis Delerye, twelve years in the employ of Messrs. Rogers, were drowned."

As for Messrs. John and James Rogers, the flood was merely a hiccup; their company continued to grow and thrive in the iron and paper industries for another century.

1885: SUCK IT UP, *BUTTERCUP*

Steamboats were chugging through Adirondack waters by the late 1800s—and not everybody was happy about it. Local guides were especially riled up over the newfangled conveyances. The passenger boats took away business, sure, but they also belched smoke and sent whistles echoing through the wilderness, which guides argued frightened away game. Worse still, waterways were being tinkered with to allow for passage of the larger vessels. That meant dams, and dams meant destruction: overflowed banks and marshes dotted with dead trees.

But W. W. Durant, who had steamers on Raquette and Blue Mountain Lakes, wasn't averse to a little damming. He'd stopped up the Marion River so that his boats could navigate between Raquette and Blue Mountain Lakes and upgraded an older dam at the outlet of Raquette Lake to ensure that water levels stayed high, moves that caused the state forest commission to note that "the scenery has been lost beyond recovery."

Failing to read the room, Durant decided to expand his line of steamers and, in 1882, launched the *Buttercup* on Long Lake. The 24-foot vessel traveled back and forth to the head of the lake, where a Durant dam had been built at Raquette Falls Carry—an impediment that flooded the Raquette River along with beaches on Long Lake.

The damage inflicted on both landscape and local pocketbooks would not go unanswered. In 1885, under the cover of darkness, a couple of guides slipped the *Buttercup* from the Sagamore dock and scuttled her in a channel. The only evidence left in the morning, according to photographer Seneca Ray Stoddard,

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was oil “seen floating over a deep place in the lake.” That same night, another gang of conspirators set upon the offending dam. “They scared off the guard by firing a shot into his campfire,” wrote historian Frances Boone Seaman, “and before he could get help at the lower end of the mile carry, a dynamite blast signaled the destruction of the dam.”

The guides’ guerrilla tactics were successful, as it was a decade before another steamboat was launched on the lake. The *Buttercup* was salvaged in 1959 and is now on display behind the Long Lake town offices.

1901: NIGHT RIDE TO THE PRESIDENCY

For Theodore Roosevelt, the road to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was bumpier and more circuitous than most.

Despite the fact that President McKinley was in Buffalo recovering from a gunshot wound inflicted by a would-be assassin, his flacks decided it would be better for morale if the veep weren’t seen skulking around.

So on September 10, 1901—four days after McKinley was shot—Roosevelt headed to the Tahawus Club in Newcomb for some R and R. On the 13th, while Teddy was climbing Mount Marcy, word was sent to the club that the president’s condition had taken a turn for the worse. A guide was sent to retrieve Roosevelt and, around midnight, the vice president decided he couldn’t wait until daylight to set off for Buffalo.

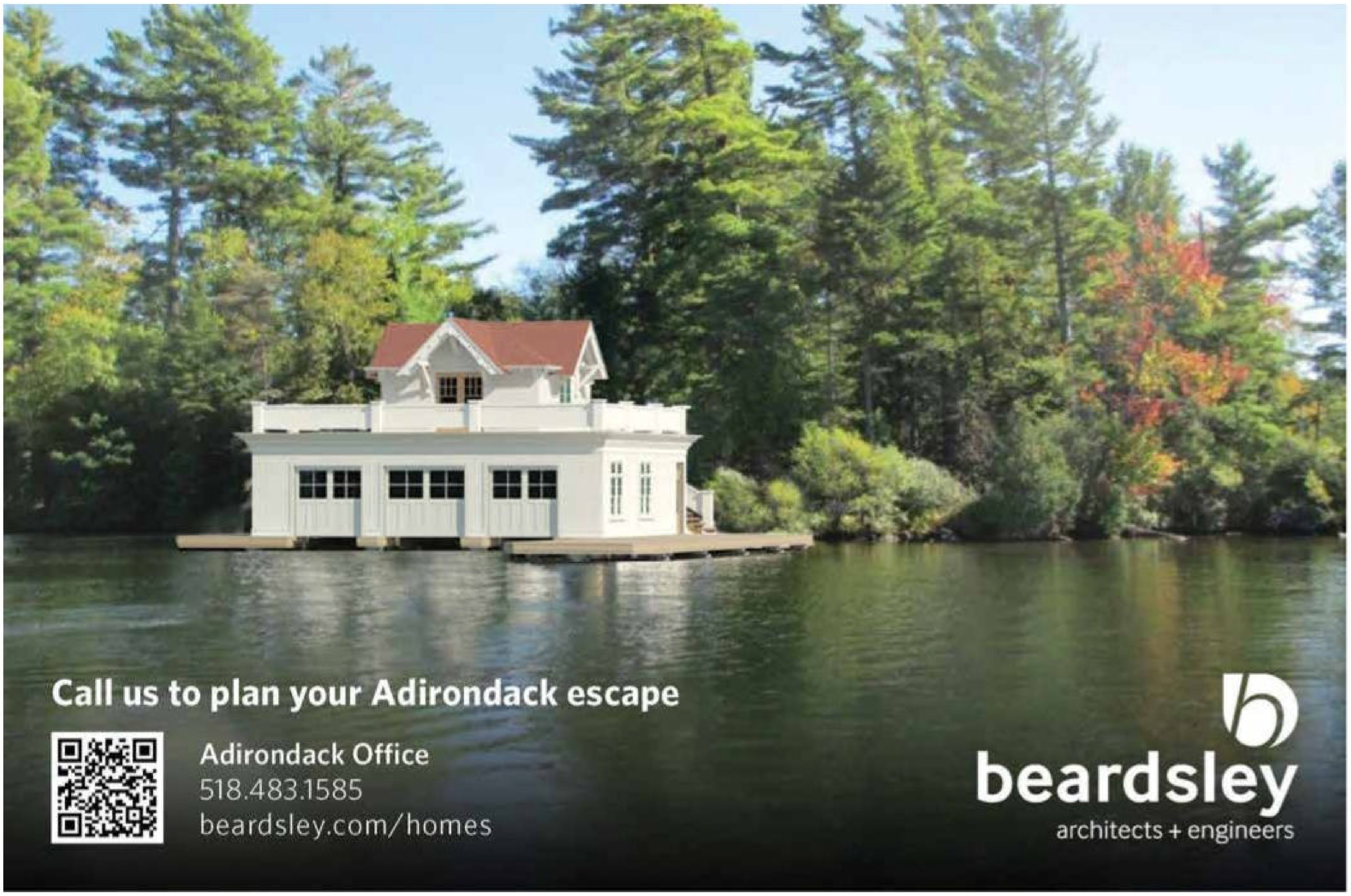
First he needed to get to the train station in North Creek, a 35-mile trip by wagon. The journey would normally take seven hours, but in three legs with as many drivers, he made it in less than five. Upon his arrival at the train station, he learned that McKinley had died.

Roosevelt was sworn in as the 26th president later that day.

1980: DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

Throughout the Cold War, the United States and the USSR jockeyed for dominance in the space race, the arms race, and just about any other competition that would demonstrate their superiority over the other.

But one area in which the USSR had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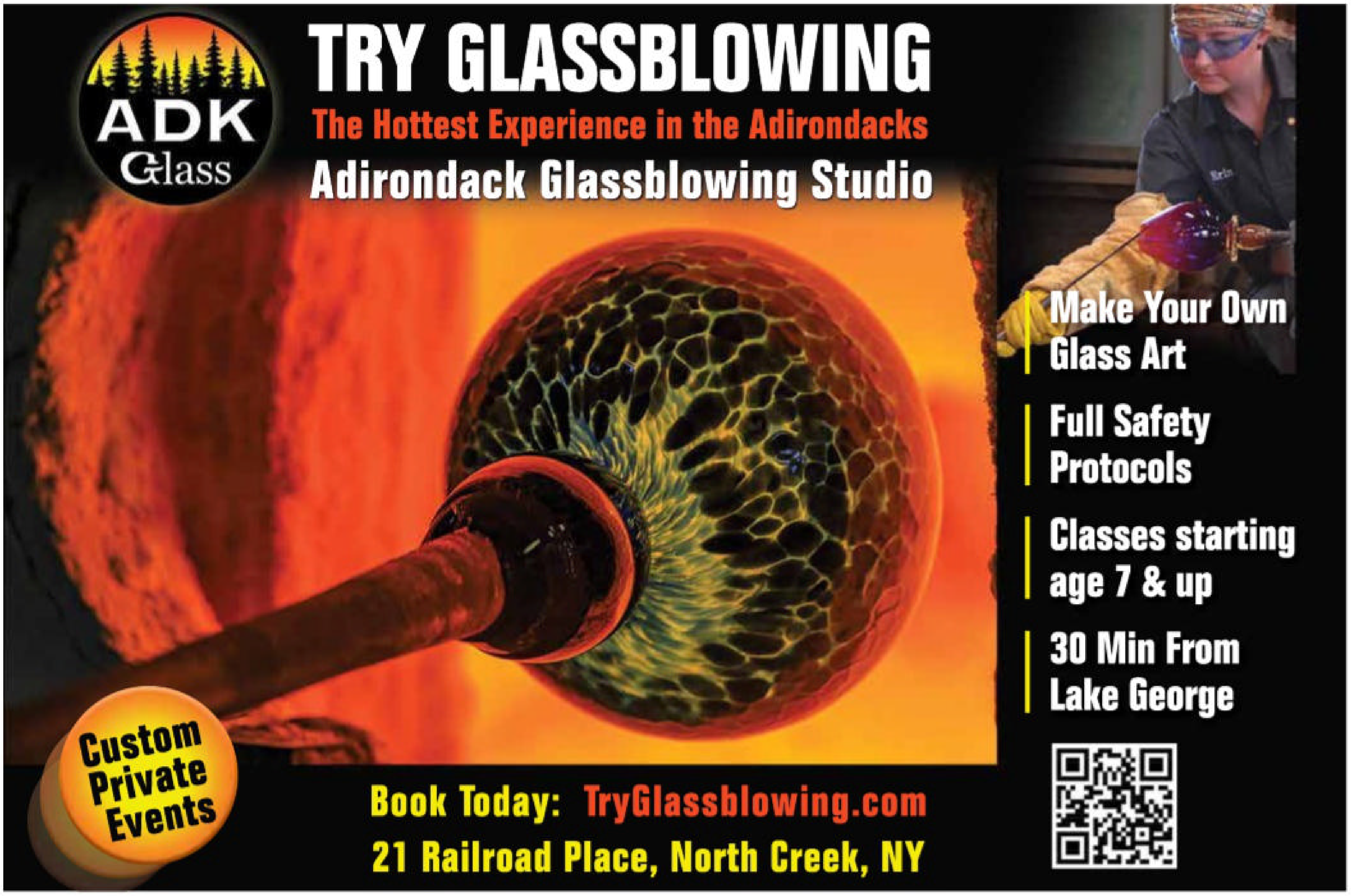
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a clear advantage was in Olympic hockey. The seventh-seeded Americans went into the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Games with little hope of besting their heavily favored Soviet counterparts, much less winning the gold.

Even after the scrappy Yanks surpassed expectations by advancing to the four-team medal round, they were underdogs in the February 22 showdown against the USSR.

The Soviets played well, scoring several goals in the first two periods, but the Americans managed to even the score each time. Finally, with 10 minutes left on the clock, the US pulled ahead. When the final horn sounded with no further score change, the stands erupted in cheers, and the American players, coaches and officials streamed onto the ice in celebration.

By the time the Americans beat Finland a few days later to clinch the gold, they were no longer underdogs, and Lake Placid had cemented its legacy as the site of the Miracle on Ice.

2015: JAIL BREAK

Clinton Correctional Facility is no one's favorite Adirondack destination, and in the wee hours of June 6, 2015, inmates Richard Matt and David Sweat—with the help of a lovesick prison seamstress, an Honor Block guard and a hacksaw blade hidden in a parcel of ground beef—tried to cut their stay short.

The felons managed to break out via a steam pipe and emerge from a manhole outside the prison walls, but their planned escape to Mexico went south when the seamstress failed to appear with the getaway car. The pair instead fled into the North Country wilderness, where they endured three weeks of blackfly bites, hunger and foodborne illness before the law finally caught up with them.

Matt was killed by a border patrolman near Malone. Sweat was recaptured just shy of the Canadian border and is now doing time at Great Meadow Correctional Facility, on the southeast border of the park. Last year he began a hunger strike, demanding to be transferred farther from Dannemora.

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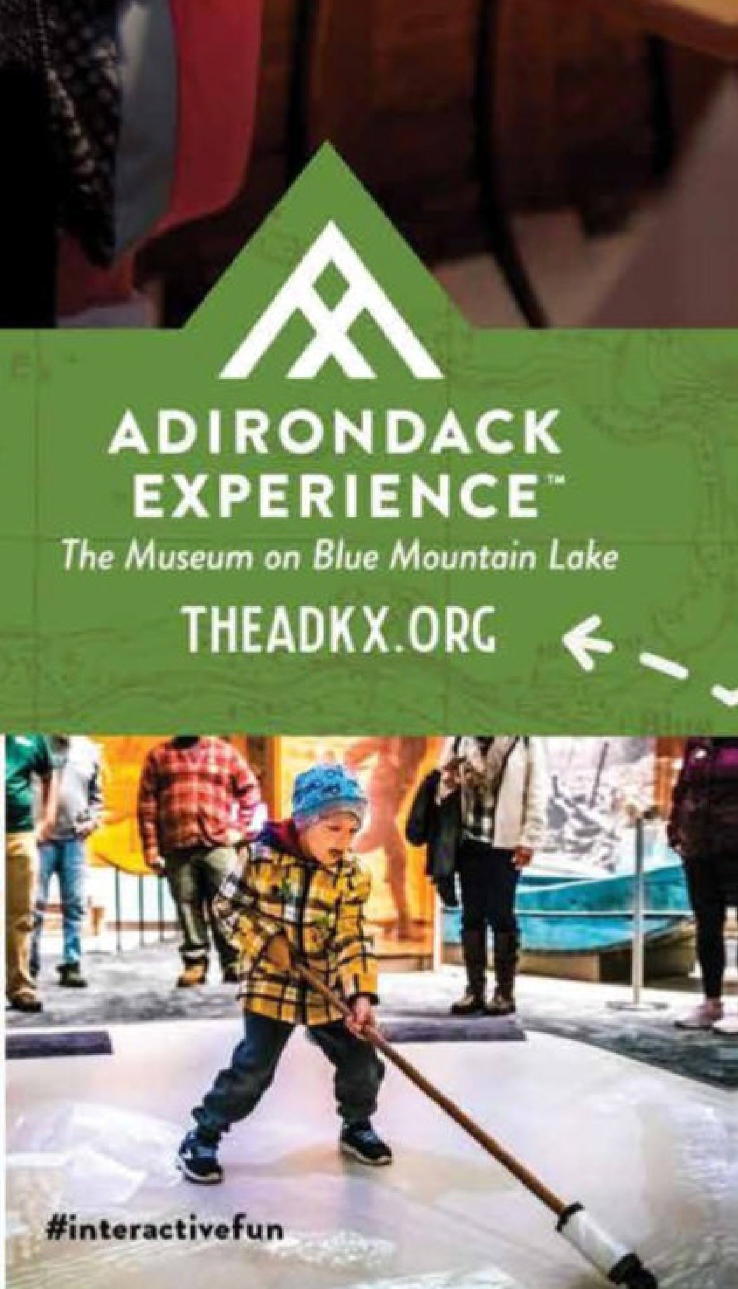
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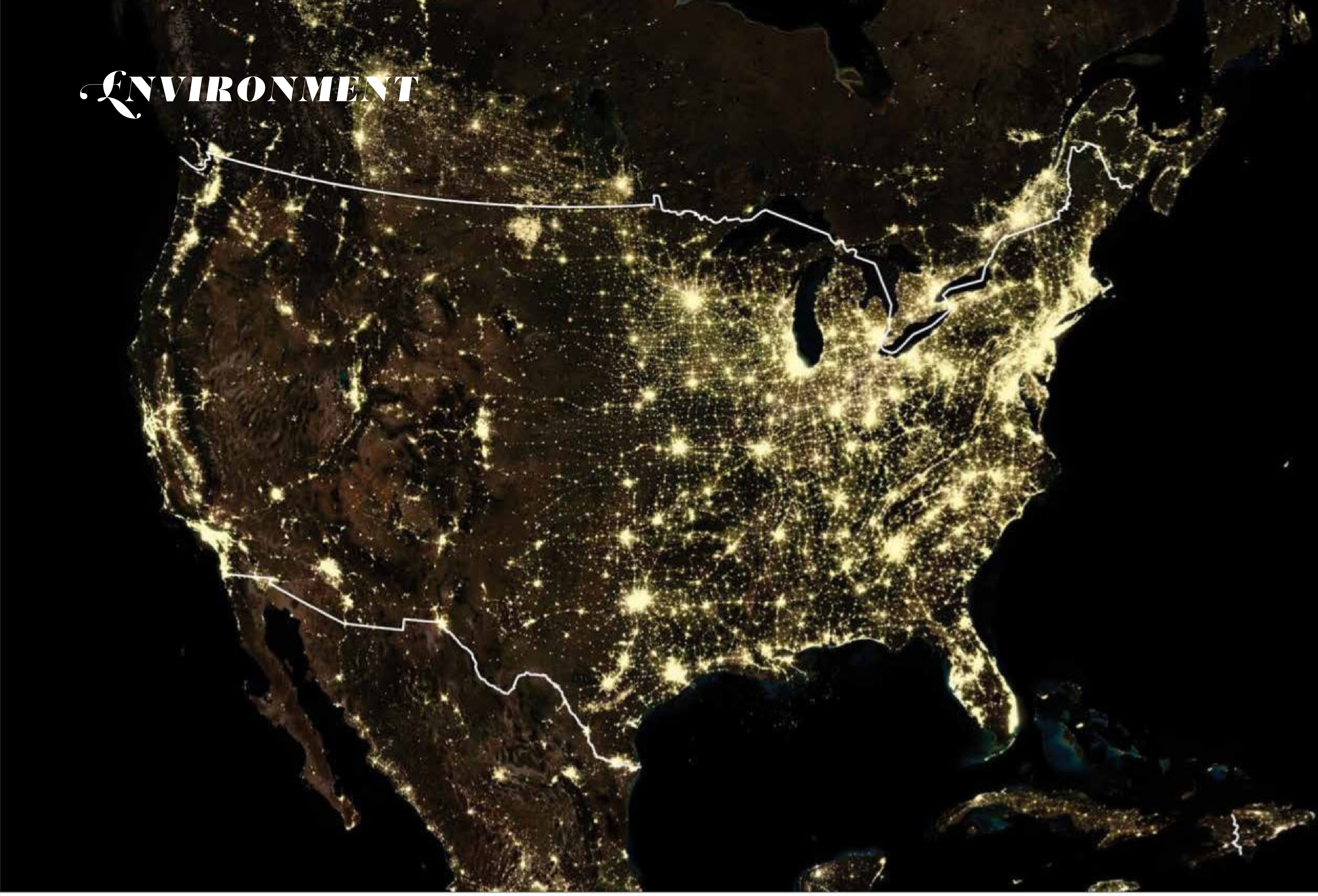

All the Light We Cannot See

Protecting the Adirondacks' dark skies

SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPH FROM PLANETOBSERVER/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

The US at night, photographed by satellite.

You might look at a satellite map of our country at night, like the one above, and assume there's not much happening in the black sprawl that's the Adirondack Park. But where there's darkness, there's magic.

Teeny saw-whet owls swoop from the cover of thick trees. Male peepers serenade potential mates. Bobcats mark their territories and cecropia silkmoths flit over meadows. Nightlife's hopping—and flying, swimming and crawling—in the Adirondacks because our dark skies aren't as polluted with the streetlights, big-box-store signs and illuminated structures you find in other places. At night, just about anywhere within the Blue Line, you can see the Milky Way, a breathtaking display the International Dark-Sky Association says almost 90 percent of people in the world will never know.

Excessive use of artificial light harms wildlife, disrupting migratory patterns and mating as well as prey and predatory practices. It affects humans by altering circadian rhythms, increasing risks for depression, obesity and other health issues. It also has economic and environmental consequences, wasting billions of dollars in energy and releasing tens of millions of tons of carbon dioxide per year. While our region is relatively dark, artificial light encroaches as new homes, roads and businesses are constructed. But there's plenty you can do to preserve our ink-black skies.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

AT HOME OR CAMP

★ Choose warm-white bulbs on the yellow side of the spectrum rather than blue daylight bulbs.

★ Use motion-sensing floodlights.

★ Only install lights where they're needed, such as areas for walking and parking, and use fixtures that shield and direct light downward.

★ Draw your blinds to keep light inside.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

★ Encourage your municipal administrators to install the least intrusive bulbs for lighting in public spaces.

★ Work with local businesses and organizations. Stewart's Shops was asked to take light pollution into consideration when building a new convenience store in Keene, leading the company to lower the color temperature of the lights it installed. Likewise, you can lobby organizations such as the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) that light up venues in Lake Placid for nighttime competitions and recreation, including the Olympic Jumping Complex; Mount Van Hoevenberg ski trails and sliding track; and the James C. Sheffield Olympic skating oval.

★ Help the cause. Globe at Night (globeatnight.org) raises public awareness of the impact of light pollution by inviting citizen-scientists to measure and submit their night sky observations.

AND BEYOND

★ The "Dark Skies Protection Act," put forth in the New York State Senate in January 2022, requires "most nonessential outdoor lighting be extinguished after 11 p.m., motion activated, or covered by an external shield." Backed by the New York State chapter of Audubon, the act addresses the disruption of migratory flyways, predator-prey interactions and other problems artificial light causes wildlife. At press time the Dark Skies Protection Act languishes. Contact your representatives to help make it a reality.

★ See the International Dark-Sky Association's site at www.darksky.org to learn more.

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HOW-TO

The Perseid meteor shower will reach its peak in the predawn hours of August 13.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL HEILMAN II

Star Struck

A guide to Adirondack night skies

BY TIM ROWLAND

Some night this summer when the sky is clear, pick up a pair of binoculars, step away from the fire pit and open your mind to celestial high-drama echoing down to us from the Babylonians, the Greeks, and from the phantasmic beginning of life and time itself.

After your eyes adjust to the dark, look to the south and follow the gauzy light of the Milky Way as it rises from the horizon to a bright yellow star, Antares.

This is the pulsating heart of the mighty scorpion, Scorpio, who at the behest of the goddess Gaia stung Orion, who had vowed to hunt down and slaughter every animal on Earth. Each spring, as the weather warms and the animals wake, Scorpio appears, chasing the winter constellation Orion from the nighttime sky.

Look down and to the left of Scorpio and see the tip of Sagittarius, the centaur’s arrow pointed directly at Antares. One wrong move out of Scorpio, and it’s curtains. Even by the modern standards of flexible identities, Sagittarius is complex, born of many myths—maybe the best being that, rather than face the fury of a jealous wife, he turned himself into a horse.

The core stars in Sagittarius more closely resemble a teapot with a cloud of steam escaping from the spout. This cloud is the heart and soul of the Milky Way, a treasure chest of celestial jewels obscuring the monster within: the black hole at the center of our galaxy, howling through time with the cosmic violence and gravitational pull of 400 million suns, crammed into a figurative shoebox. Stars race around it at fantastic speeds, like bunnies trying to escape a hound. From the fringe of its great maw glows the only visible sign of its existence, a roiling gaseous froth, like cosmic blood dripping from its ravenous jaws.

More glorious pandemonium is all around the galaxy, the great clouds of nebulae, exploding clusters of new stars, death throes of swollen stars exhausting their fuel, fireballs screaming across the firmament—all this in a universe so vast that our galaxy is but a blip, a honky tonk on a universal back road. Yet here we sit on Earth worried that our printer is about to run out of magenta.

“We have all these postage-stamp-sized problems on this dust ball at the edge of the galaxy,” said Aileen O’Donoghue, a professor of physics at St. Lawrence University. “But for all the troubles on the surface of the Earth, the future of space exploration is very bright.”

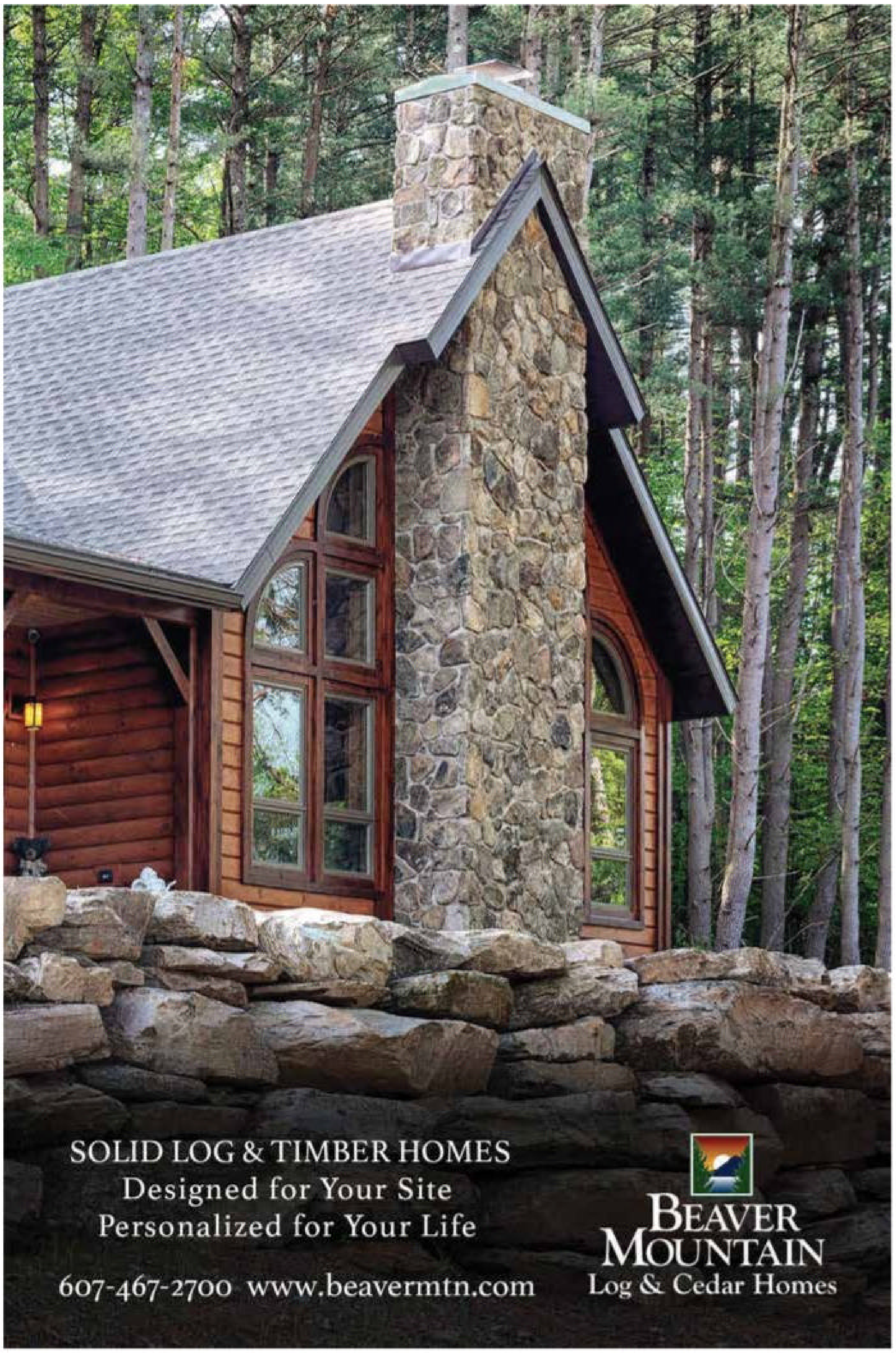
The Adirondacks provides a front row seat to a story with infinite chapters. Its dark skies make for some of the best stargazing in the East, in an age that seems to be rediscovering its connection to the cosmos after a half-century drought.

When we walked on the moon back before the younger generation of Adirondack adventurers was even born, “We thought it was the beginning, but lo and behold it was the end, for 50 years,” O’Donoghue said.

Space shuttles exploded; the Hubble telescope stumbled out of the blocks; people with imaginations that did not exceed their own lifespans questioned why we would spend money seeking information about unreachable worlds.

Today that momentum has shifted. In the past year alone, we played billiards with asteroids, revived lunar missions, sent a helicopter scudding through the Martian atmosphere, and gasped at mind-bending images sent back to Earth by the new James Webb telescope.

Elon Musk may have saved Ukraine with his network of Internet-beam-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ing satellites. The mercurial billionaire himself rocketed into space and expressed his desire to die on Mars, a wish his critics expressed interest in accommodating.

A 91-year-old Captain Kirk from the starship *Enterprise* (occasionally known as William Shatner) went into space too, an event that was particularly poignant among the American public, said Seth McGowan, vice president of the Adirondack Sky Center in Tupper Lake.

The center is the heart of Adirondack astrotourism, where 100 people or so would gather every other Friday night to view celestial events through a battery of powerful telescopes. Now, due to demand and the unpredictability of cloud cover, the observatory opens more frequently, on evenings that will be optimal for viewing. Stargazers can check the Sky Center's Facebook page to see if it's going to be open, or subscribe to email notifications at adirondacksky center.org.

> **The Adirondacks provides a front row seat to a story with infinite chapters. Its dark skies make for some of the best stargazing in the East, in an age that seems to be rediscovering its connection to the cosmos.**

Increasing public interest in the skies can be gauged by space-related references in pop culture, and today even a commercial for cereal is likely as not to feature a child in a space helmet. "People are coming from all over to stargaze—Montreal, Syracuse, New York City, Boston," McGowan said. "It's absolutely made Tupper Lake into a destination."

At the other end of the spectrum from space-traveling celebrities, the pandemic sent urban dwellers to rural locales where they looked up and saw

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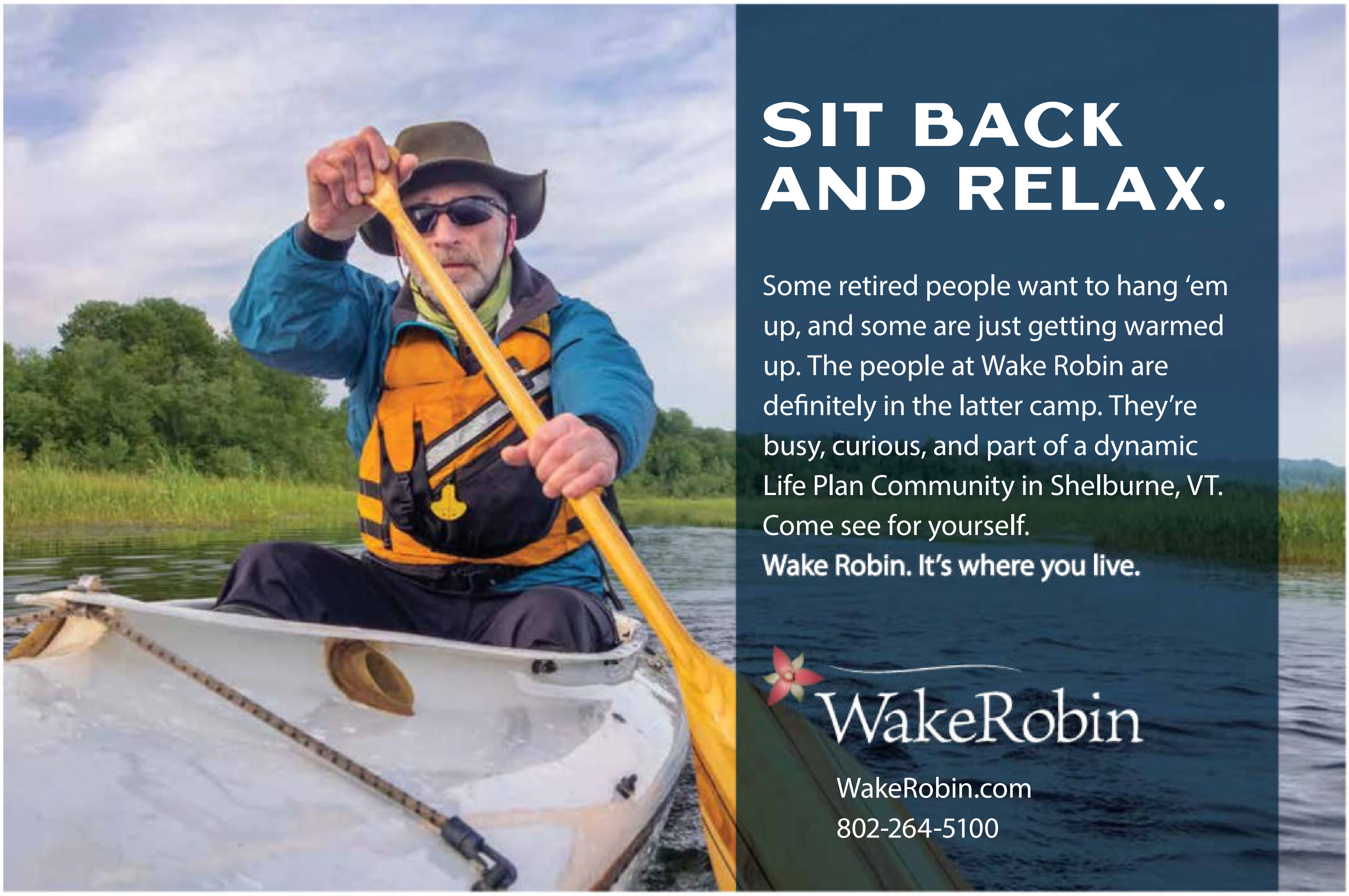

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the wonders of the heavens, maybe for the first time. And everyone, regardless of station, is privy to the same connection: the very elements that are Up There are in us. "We came from the cosmos," O'Donoghue said. "I look up at the stars and I see my friends."

It doesn't take a telescope to make new friends; in fact, binoculars are preferable, at least at first, because their wide field of view makes it easier to navigate the night sky. And even this modest magnification pulls back the curtain on incredible new worlds.

O'Donoghue recommends treating the sky as you would a new city. First you locate the hotel, or in this case, the easily recognizable Big Dipper in the northern skies. "The Big Dipper is our anchor," she said. "Then you can start finding your way around, the way in a new city you would start looking for a restaurant." A sky chart or app serves as a tour guide.

O'Donoghue said that the heavens hold promise for our ability to understand how we came into being and what the future might hold. For the Babylonians, the constellations "were their story books," she said, and they were able to figure out their location even in daytime.

For us, as our instruments detect exoplanets (planets beyond our solar system) with an atmosphere similar to Earth, the future is staggering. "We are brand new in the universe, and look what we have figured out," she said. "We know what the stars are, we know why they shine. James Webb is going to teach us new things and new physics we can't even imagine. It's so exciting."

COMING ATTRACTIONS

★ On May 15–16 the crescent moon will hang low in the west and provide a particularly good example of the phenomenon of "earthshine." While the crescent is aglow, the entire moon will be visible as well, the result of sunshine bouncing off the Earth and

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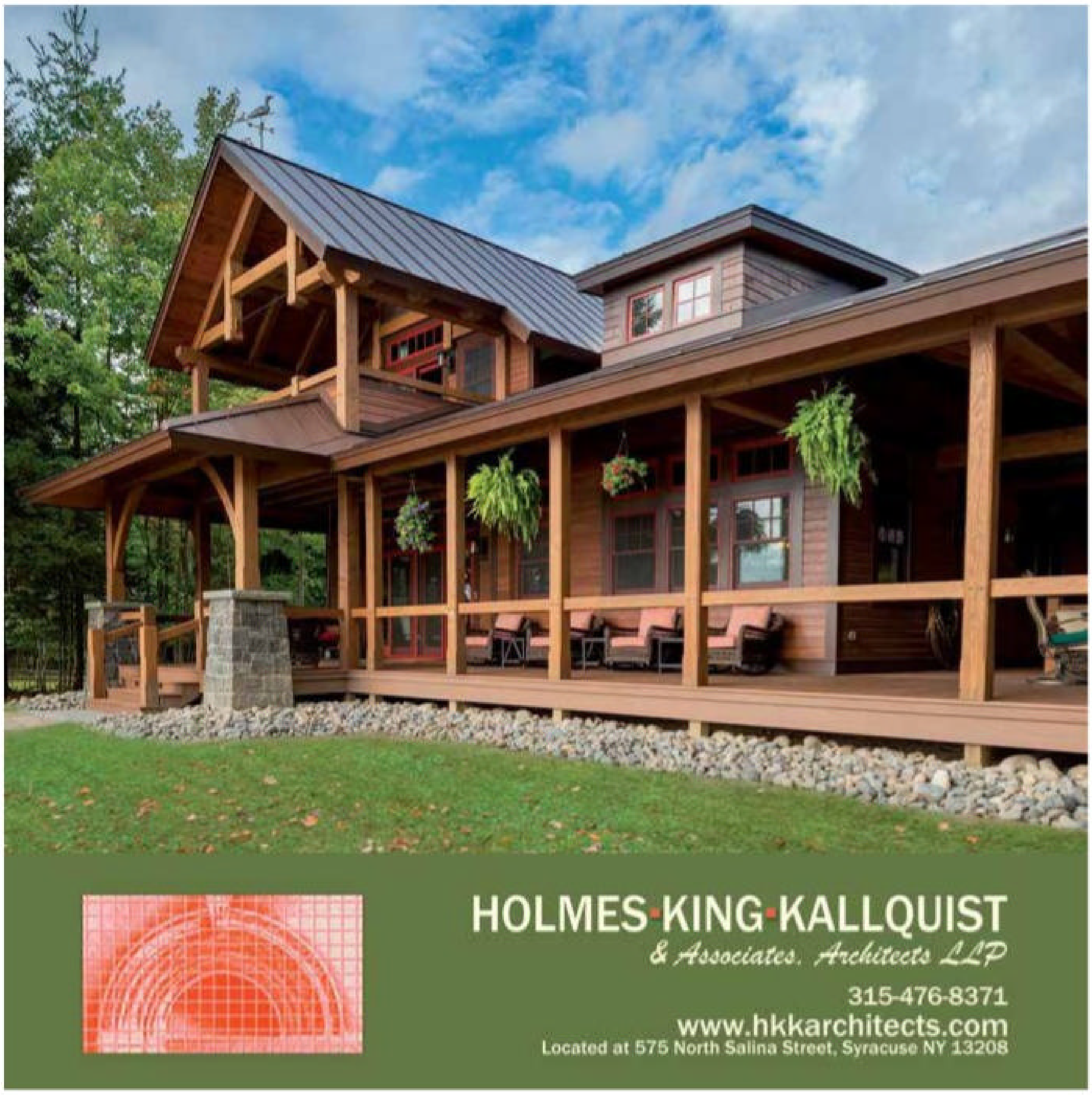
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illuminating the moon.

For centuries, this baffled stargazers. The man who finally noodled it through was none other than Leonardo da Vinci, and today the dim lighting illuminating the entirety of the moon is known as Da Vinci's Glow.

★ Mars will visit the "Beehive" on June 1–2, a cluster of a thousand gravity-bound stars whose collective glow can be seen with the naked eye, but whose presence will be enhanced with binoculars. The dalliance occurs in the western sky that Mars will share with the brighter planet Venus. Venus itself will pass into the Beehive June 12–13.

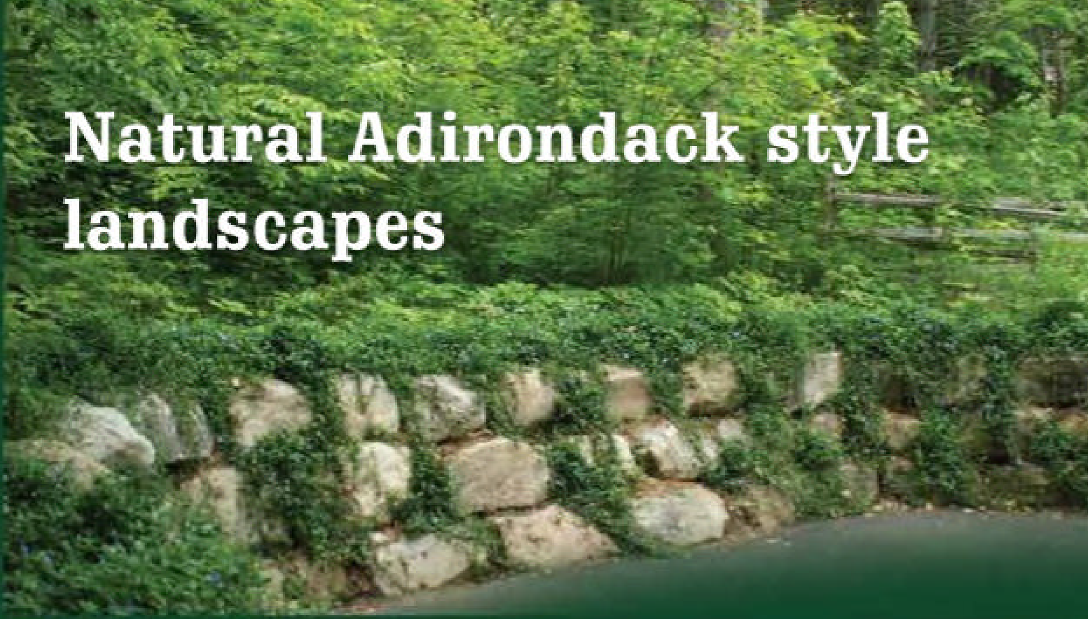
★ The summer solstice of June 21 sees a crescent moon in the west putting on a show with Venus. Higher and dimmer is the planet Mars and beyond that the star Regulus, the brightest star in the constellation Leo.

Regulus is 79 light-years from the sun, meaning the photons we see have been traveling through space since the beginning of World War II.

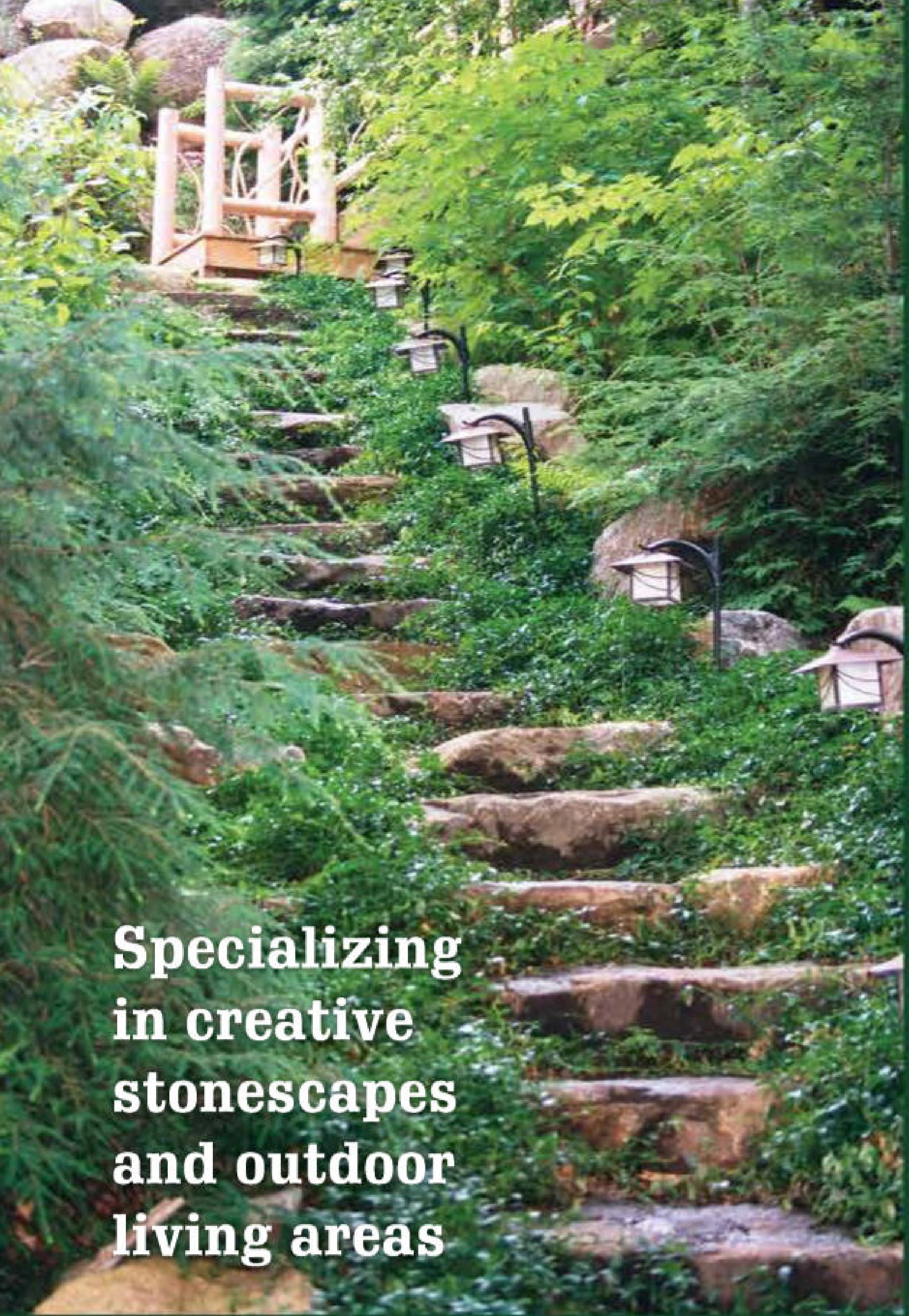
★ From July 19 to July 21 the planet Mercury makes a rare cameo appearance along with Venus, Mars and Regulus. It will be dim, low on the western horizon, but if you can catch it, the four closest planets will be visible at once, assuming you are counting Earth.

★ Sci-Fi movies love to show daring starship pilots dodging their way through fields of meteors or asteroids. It is a testament to the great scope of empty space, McGowan said, that even in their thickest concentrations, the need to dodge just one—much less a hailstorm—would be slim to none.

Still, from late July to mid-August, the Perseid meteor shower—sparks created by leftover comet debris—can make it seem as if flying objects are all around. The Perseid peaks this summer on August 13, when under perfect conditions it can be possible to see as many as 150 meteors an hour. They're visible all night, but are most prevalent in the early, predawn hours.



Natural Adirondack style landscapes



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Heart of Darkness

HIKING THE ADIRONDACKS AT NIGHT

BY BRIAN MANN

ILLUSTRATION BY
JAMES WESTON LEWIS

A few years ago, I went hiking in the late afternoon in the Split Rock Wild Forest on the east coast of the Adirondacks. It was one of those after-work impulses, a chance to escape my desk and wander in deep woods. The beauty of the sun slanting through the trees was enchanting and I walked farther than I intended.

Standing on a shelf of rock looking toward the High Peaks, I realized my mistake. I had no headlamp, no source of light, and the sky was already a bruised shade of purple and red. Shadows crept over the valley below. As I watched, the sun slipped away behind the mountains.

I was scared and set off at a run for the trailhead, knowing it was already too late. Dark would find me in the woods unprepared. As I moved, the light dwindled. It was like one of those spooky fairy tales, the path fading cruelly from view, then abruptly vanishing. It was pitch black under the canopy of trees and I was stuck.

This may sound like a crazy way to introduce the beauty of night hiking, but it’s important to start with the basics. A lot of forest ranger reports detailing the struggles of lost and stranded Adirondack hikers can be summed up in a single sentence: they didn’t bring a headlamp. That was me. It’s crazy how casually we leave behind such an essential tool.

The simple fact is that your headlamp (and your backup source of light and your spare batteries) are your superpower. They magically transform a scary Split Rock–style experience (which ended safely, thanks to a bit of unearned luck) into something cool and liberating.

So any time you leave a trailhead, no matter the time of day, the season or your intentions, you must have a trustworthy light shoved in your pocket or in your pack.

Now the fun part. A few months ago, I set off into the Hurricane Mountain Wilderness at three a.m. in total darkness, this time happily on purpose and properly prepared. My goal was to reach the fire tower on the summit in time to watch the sunrise. A clean, confident beam of light swept ahead of me on the trail, like a guiding spirit.

Night hiking can be a little eerie, especially when you're solo. Outside your tiny pool of illumination, everything is ink black. Shadows shift like dark curtains. It feels at times like a journey through an underworld. On this night it was perfectly still at first: no wind, no birds, just the sound of my boots scuffing over pine needles and rock. Crossing a boardwalk through a wetland on the flank of the mountain, I paused to look at the stars and listen to a few sleepy frogs chirruping.

One obvious question is … why? Why come to a place as beautiful as the Adirondacks only to travel the woods in a tunnel of darkness? There are some practical answers. To reach mountain summits at sunrise, you have to begin your climb in the middle of the night. Getting on the trail super early is also a great way to beat the park's swelling crowds. It's also a simple fact that in late autumn and winter, daylight is scarce. Many backcountry trips of any scale will have to begin or end in darkness—often both.

But there is also beauty and a meditative peace to night hiking. The trek up Hurricane was dreamlike. A simple stream crossing was transformed into a Japanese wash painting. A patch of moss and fern caught in the glare of my light flashed neon green. The sense of physical touch, fingers brushing tree bark and stone, felt more intense.

As I moved, the sky started to simmer through the trees, a lilac predawn glow so faint it seemed at first like something I was imagining. Then in the last half-hour of climbing, the birds came awake. A banditry of chickadees moved through the shadowy hemlocks just above my head. Darkness and stillness were replaced by mother-of-pearl colors and echoes of birdsong.

The rocky crown of Hurricane was a revelation at that hour. It smelled of warm dust and pine. The distant mountains all around were dusk blue, topped in mist; it was still night in the valleys.

I had the summit to myself. Maybe the biggest reward of night hiking is the solitude, the sense of a deeper remoteness, a more primal wildness.

Up ahead stood the metal tower with its little cabin on top. Scrambling up, the view opened even wider as the eastern sky unfurled. Just after five a.m. the sun flushed red on the horizon, coloring the Adirondacks with rose light. In that moment, as the last darkness washed away, the world felt ancient and entirely new.

Brian Mann is a correspondent for National Public Radio who makes his home in Westport when not traveling on assignment. He's lived in the Adirondacks since 1999 and is a former reporter for North Country Public Radio and a longtime contributor to *Adirondack Life*.

IF YOU GO

Hiking in the dark can be a pleasure—magnificent night skies and little traffic on trails and summits. But Department of Environmental Conservation forest ranger Rob Praczkajlo reminds hikers to consider the following:

- Bring two headlamps with backup batteries. Do not rely on your phone's flashlight.
- Bring a water-purifier. Hikers often require rescue because they're dehydrated. Most Adirondack peaks are covered in streams and other water sources.
- Night hikers tend to spend more time on a summit, stargazing and appreciating the scene. Carry a 400-level synthetic insulated jacket, even in warm weather, and an 800-level in winter. Expect below-zero temps at high elevations any night of summer.
- Wear supportive, well-broken-in footwear that's appropriate for mountain terrain.
- Only hike if you're in shape for the physical exertion required.
- Bring a paper map and compass. Tell someone where you're going and when you plan to be back. Sign in at the trailhead.
- Consider a locator beacon. Today's technology is incredible and subscriptions are inexpensive.
- Accidents happen. No matter what your plan, even if it's a day hike, be prepared to spend 6 to 8 hours on the trail should you need to be rescued. That might mean a long night on a mountain.

Going Batty

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR INDISPENSABLE NOCTURNAL CREATURES

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT BATS? "Besides the fact they're cute," says bat researcher Vanessa Rojas, assistant professor at SUNY-ESF Ranger School, based in Wanakena, "the ecosystem services they provide are critical. Bats eat forest defoliators and other pests. I can't imagine what our forests would be like without them."

There's reason to worry. White-Nose Syndrome (WNS), an invasive fungus discovered in 2007, is still a threat. The fungus, which presents as a white fuzz on bats' faces, grows as the creatures hibernate. It somehow triggers the bats to become active in daylight in winter, burning up energy needed to survive.

In January, Rojas, a member of the Northeast Bat Working Group, met with 200 of her colleagues in Vermont. It was confirmed that WNS has spread to 38 US states and eight Canadian provinces. "In some of the caves surveyed, where WNS hit there's been a population loss close to 99 percent," says Rojas.

A figure like that is jaw-dropping. Millions of bats have been killed, especially the northern long-eared, little brown and tri-colored, which are among the cave-dwelling species that live in the Adirondacks. Migratory species that don't use caves, such as silver-hair, eastern red and hoary, have fared better, though they're affected by wind turbines and habitat destruction.

The good news? Rojas says she's still seeing bats on the Adirondack nightscape, including little browns. Today the Department of Environmental Conservation monitors at-risk caves. And scientists and policy-makers are working to adjust federal protections for the most vulnerable species.

Adirondackers can help, too. "Recognize the importance of bats," says Rojas. "Let the stigma go, enjoy watching them fly around. Bats overhead are part of the Adirondacks' nighttime aesthetic."

How to Help

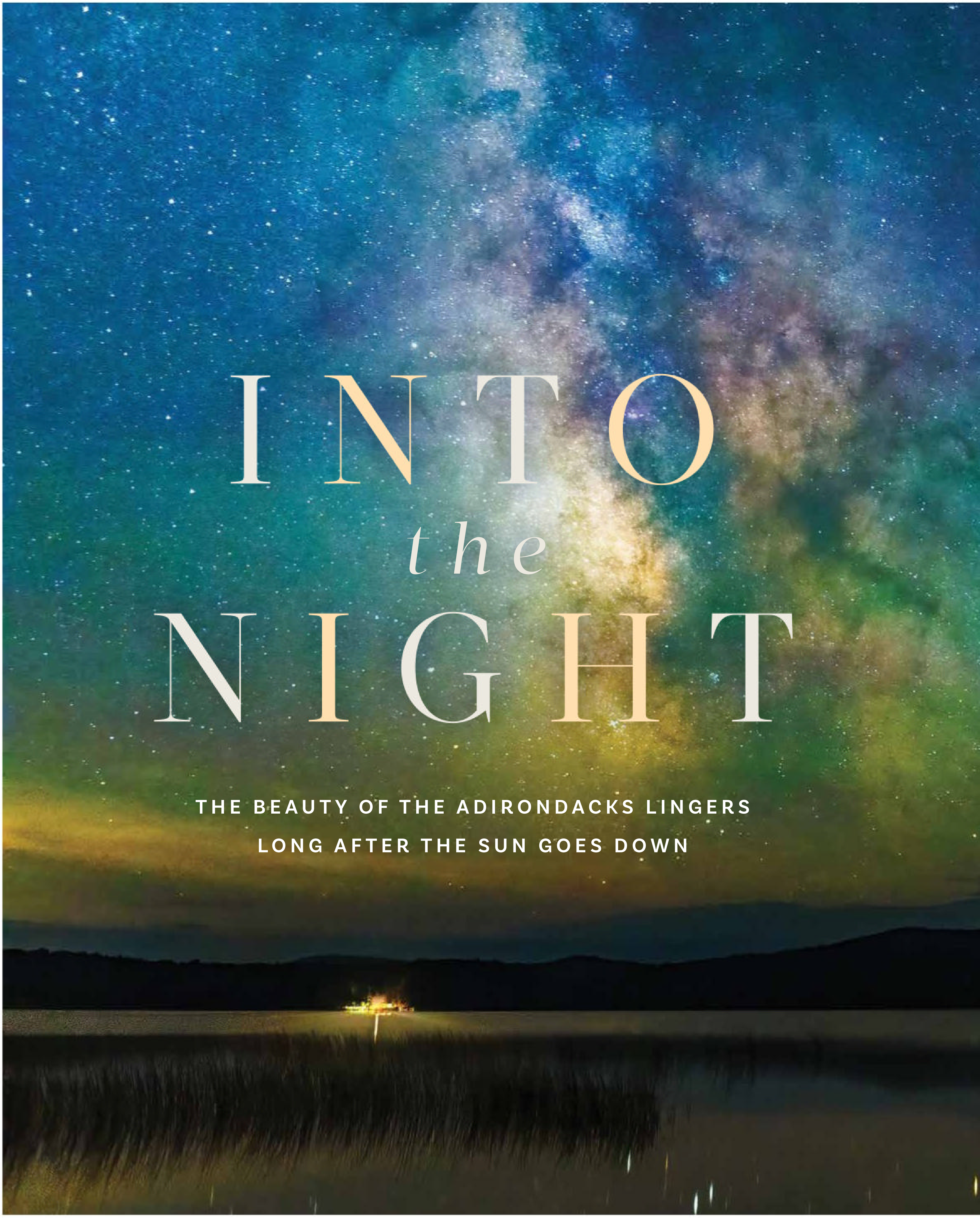
Vanessa Rojas suggests the following for protecting Adirondack bats:

•If a bat finds its way in your home, don't panic. Open doors and windows—they're pretty good at navigating out.
•Keep cats indoors.
•Grow a pollinator garden.
•Maintain a dark backyard to help bats forage at night.
•Respect rules about avoiding caves when bats are sleeping or hibernating.
•Less than one percent of bats have rabies. Still, never pick up or touch a bat.

Learn more about bats—the only mammals capable of true flight—at Bat Conservation International's website, **www.batcon.org**. The White-Nose Syndrome Response Team has a site, **www.whitenosesyndrome.org**, that further explains what it considers "one of the worst wildlife diseases in modern times."

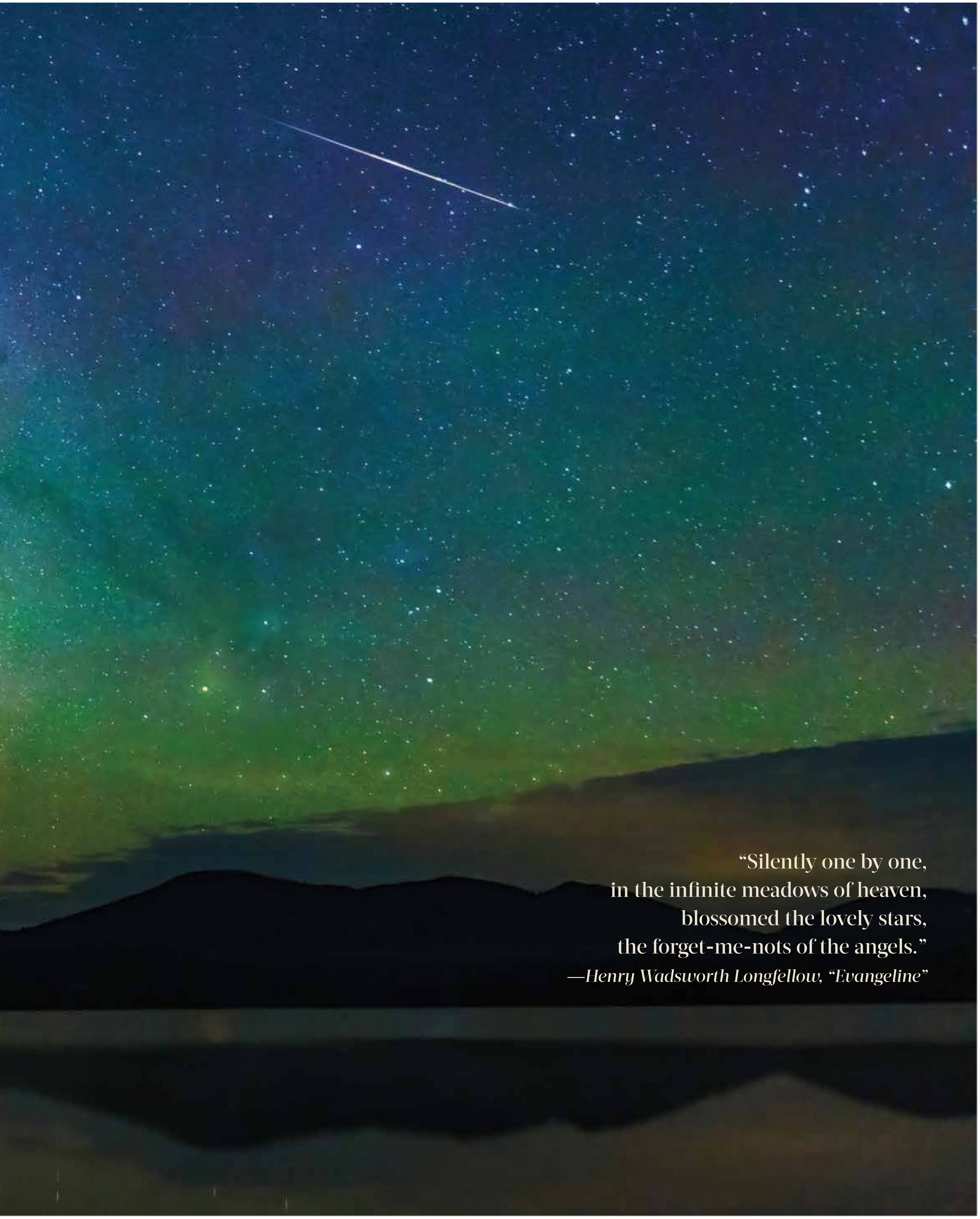
The hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), one of nine species found in the Adirondacks, makes a compelling ambassador. Vanessa Rojas calls it "cute and fuzzy" and, according to Bat Conservation International, the hoary, "with its distinct salt-and-pepper coloration and luscious glossy fur … may just be the George Clooney of the bat world." These migratory bats—loners who in daylight conceal themselves in trees—eat mosquitoes and moths, and may fly up to 8,000 feet in elevation during migration.

HOARY BAT PHOTOGRAPH FROM SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

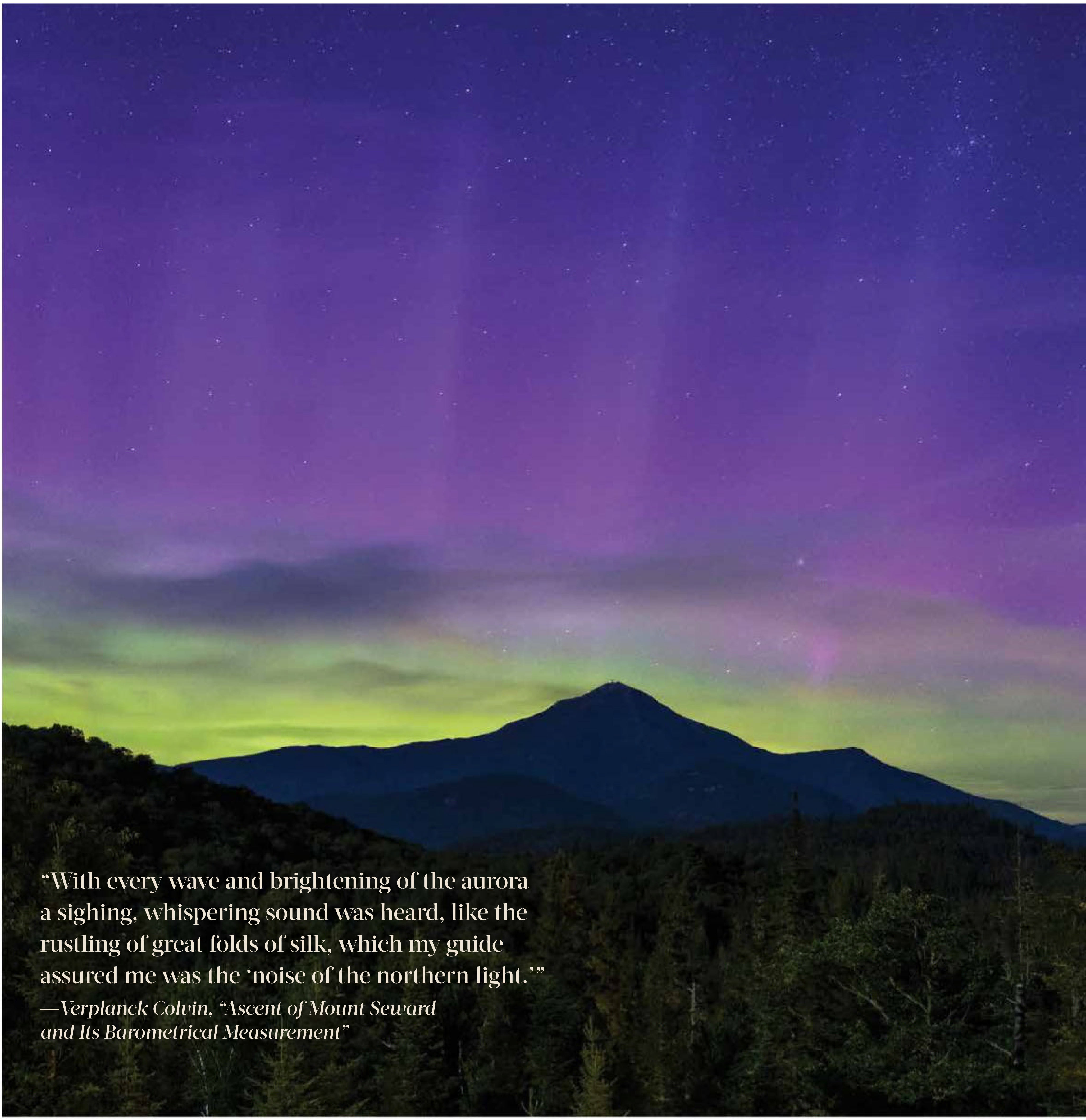


INTO *the* NIGHT

THE BEAUTY OF THE ADIRONDACKS LINGERS LONG AFTER THE SUN GOES DOWN



“Silently one by one,
in the infinite meadows of heaven,
blossomed the lovely stars,
the forget-me-nots of the angels.”
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Evangeline”



> “With every wave and brightening of the aurora a sighing, whispering sound was heard, like the rustling of great folds of silk, which my guide assured me was the ‘noise of the northern light.’”
> *—Verplanck Colvin, “Ascent of Mount Seward and Its Barometrical Measurement”*

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Aurora borealis over Whiteface Mountain photograph by Johnathan Esper. Piercefield Flow photograph by Mark Bowie. Frontier Town, North Hudson, photograph by Carl Heilman II
PAGES 38–39:
Milky Way over Lake Eaton, Long Lake, photograph by Mark Bowie

WESTERN OUTFITTERS
EST 1849

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Tupper Lake, July 16–20

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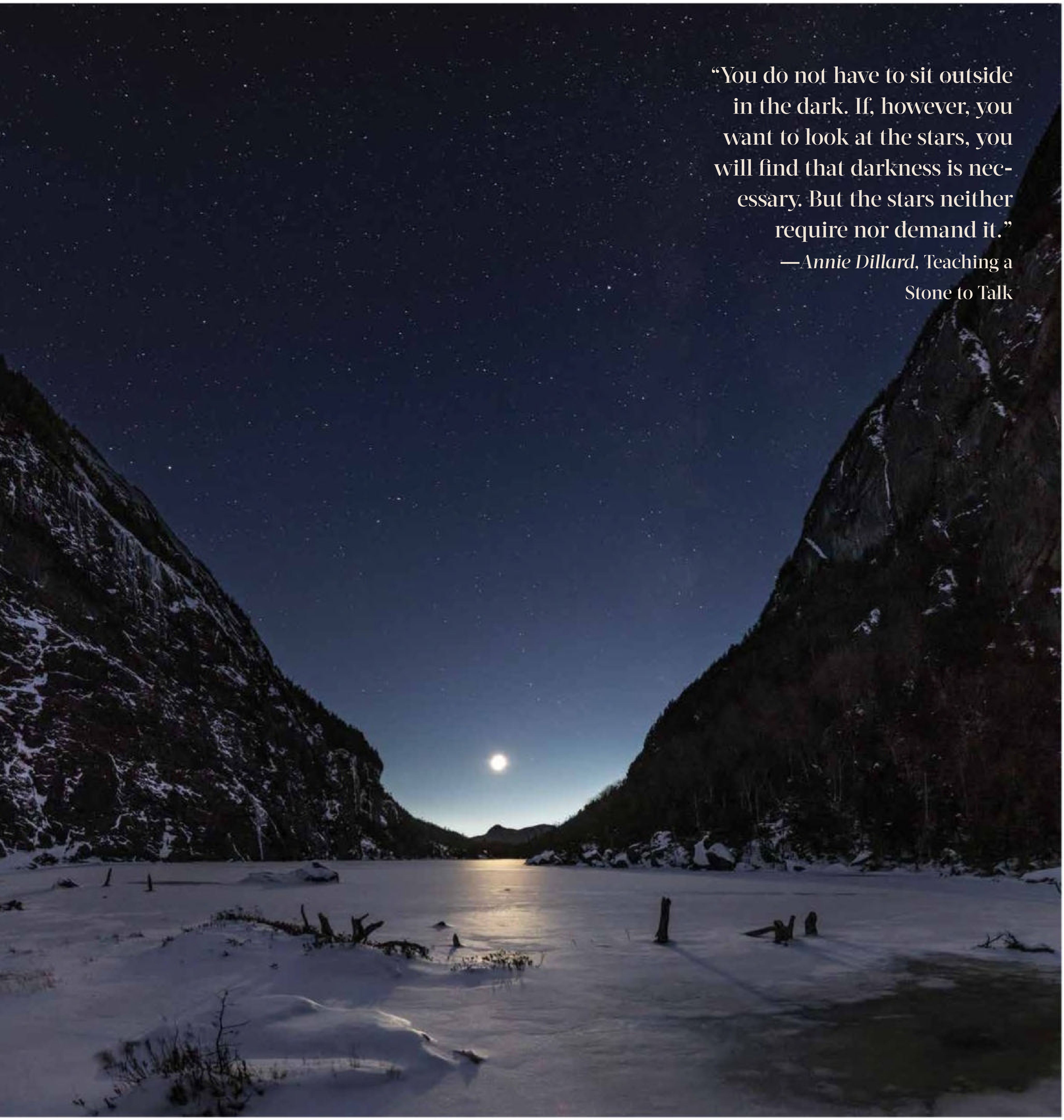
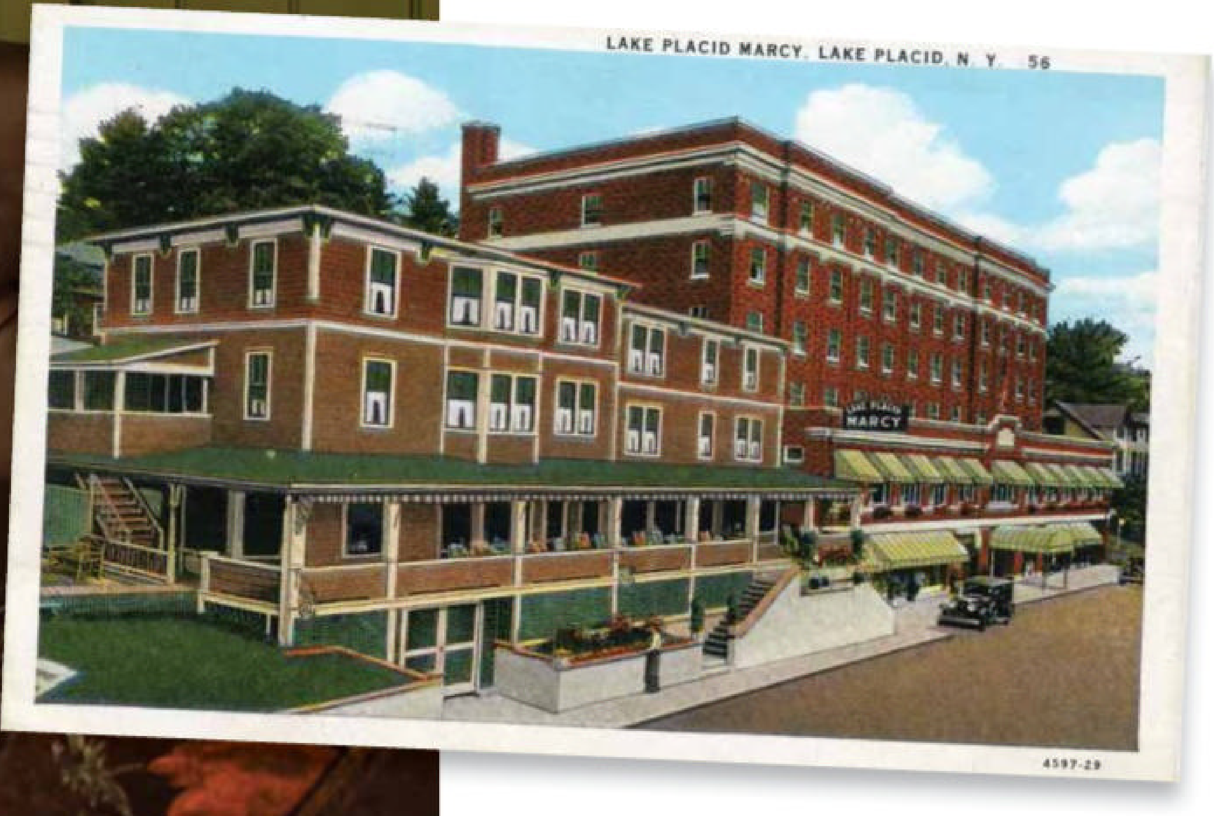


> "You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary. But the stars neither require nor demand it."
> —*Annie Dillard*, Teaching a Stone to Talk

CLOCKWISE FROM FACING PAGE, TOP:
Cairn on Mount Marcy summit and Avalanche Lake photographs by Johnathan Esper.
Milky Way over the High Peaks photograph by Manuel Palacios, Zone 3 Photography

The Grand Adirondack Hotel

WHEN IT COMES TO LAKE PLACID NIGHTLIFE, EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN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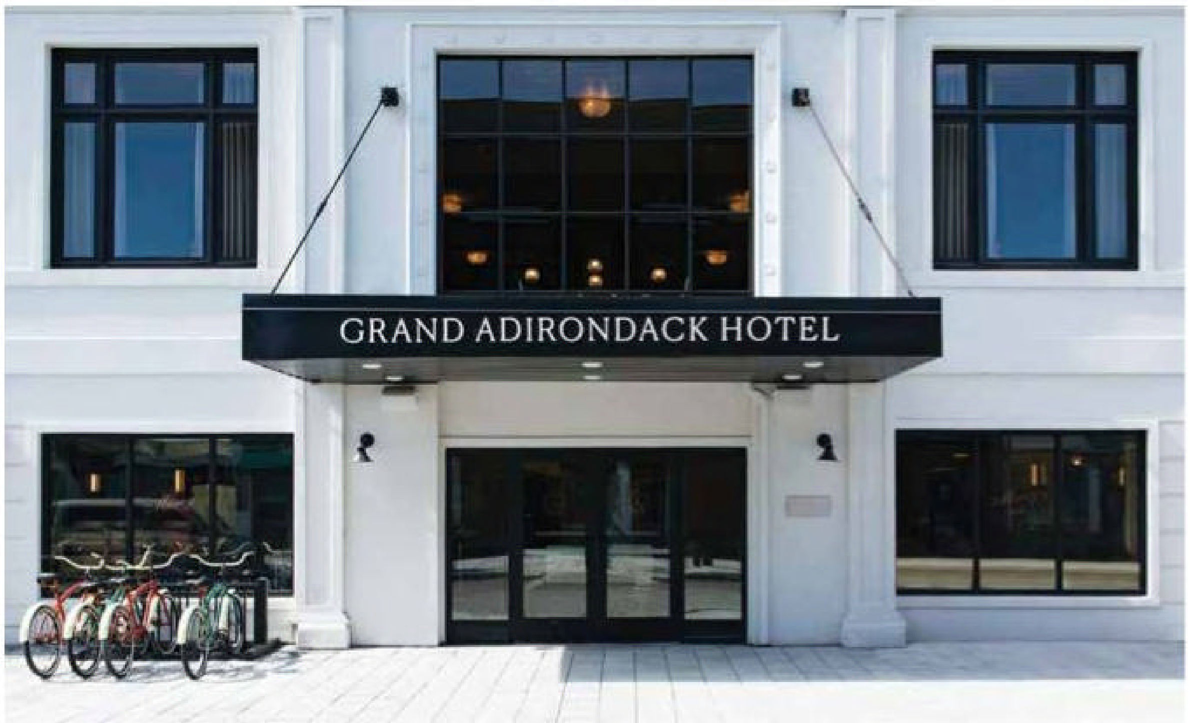


LONGTIME ADIRONDACKERS get attached to places the way they knew them, mostly for sentimental reasons. In my case, more than 20 years ago I met my now-husband in the second-floor lounge of Lake Placid's old Northwoods Inn.

That hotel has been around a while, before Placid hosted the '32 Winter Olympics, as Main Street began filling in with accommodations and shops, precursors to the bustling strip we know today.

The Northwoods Inn, originally called Hotel Marcy, was built with brick in 1927, the community's first fireproof hotel. When it went up along Main, it elevated the lodging game. Marcy's imposing exterior, its soaring Great Room, massive ballroom and more than a hundred guest suites gave it landmark status, and for decades it was a fashionable place to stay in Lake Placid. The property changed hands in the 1950s, was eventually renamed the Northwoods Inn after a boarding house that once stood adjacent to it, and the hotel weathered the years as the village and visitors' vacation habits changed.

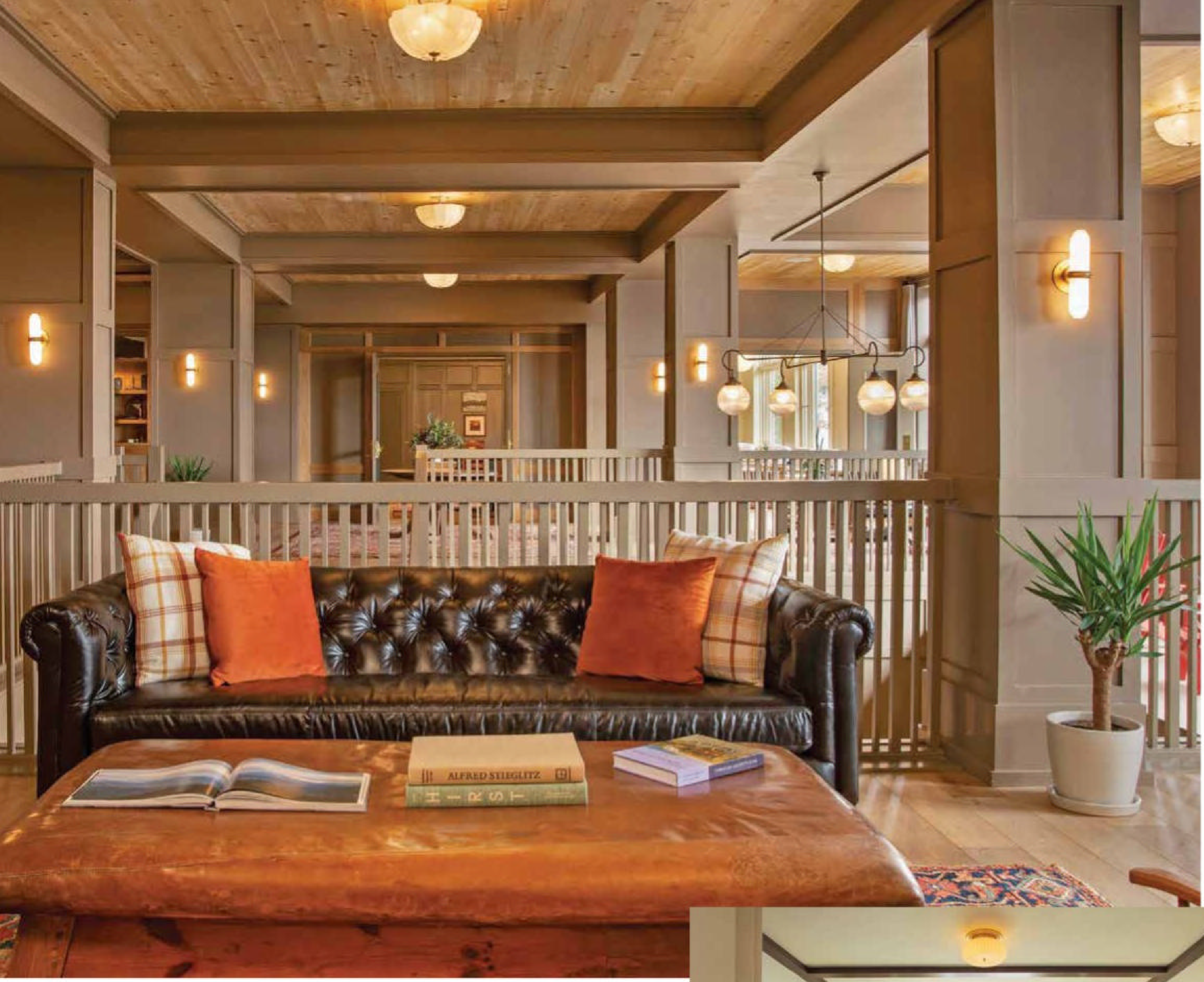
Last August a much-needed renovated iteration of the historic inn was unveiled as the Grand Adirondack Hotel. The bones of the original Marcy are still there, with simple but stylish guest rooms and a sprawling lobby. On the hotel's first floor is Marcy, branded a "brasserie-style" eaterie; for cocktails and small plates there's the more atmospheric Marcy Bar, with abundant, comfortable seating. Set to open this summer is Cloud Splitter, a rooftop bar with an elevator accessible from Main Street. The entire place smells faintly of woodsmoke, décor throughout is simple and refined, with watercolors by wildlife artist James Prosek, plus historic photographs and postcards on the walls. Massive windows frame views of the surrounding peaks and the action along Main. The vibe is classic and nostalgic.

During a recent tour of the hotel, I was anxious and curious about the lounge's transformation. That space, once known as the Cabin and now called the Great Room, will forever be a part of my story, of the start of my family and why I'm in the Adirondacks today. What I saw was stately and woodsy, a cozy place with fireplace and bar, spacious enough for group celebrations or performances or other affairs. It's more like the elegant North Woods aesthetic of the original Marcy, but merges the past with the present—a backdrop for memories to come. —*Annie Stoltie*

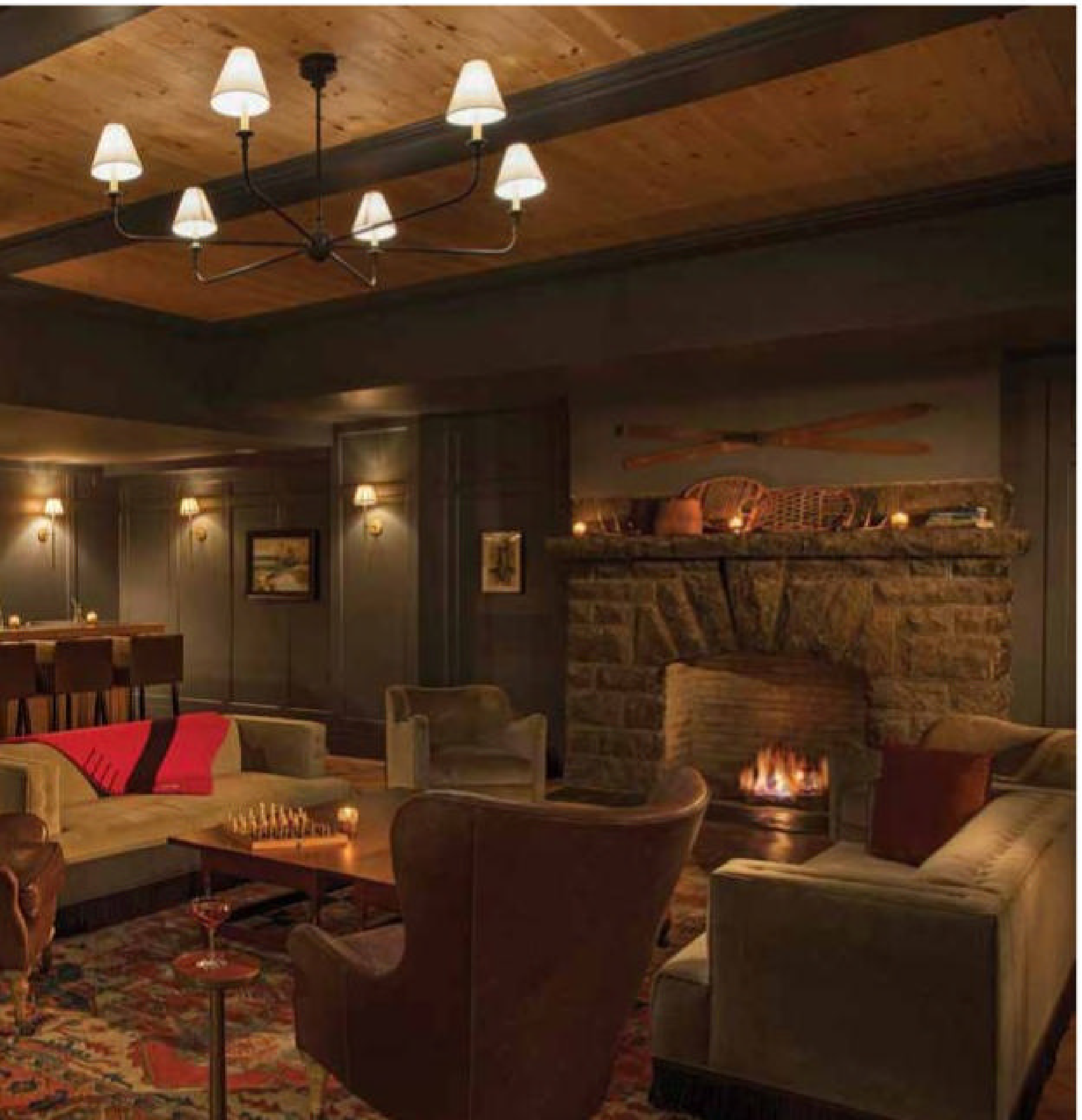
THE ENTIRE PLACE SMELLS FAINTLY OF WOODSMOKE, AND DÉCOR IS SIMPLE AND REFINED. MASSIVE WINDOWS FRAME VIEWS OF SURROUNDING PEAKS. THE VIBE IS CLASSIC AND NOSTALGIC.

IF YOU GO

Find the Grand Adirondack Hotel (www.grandadirondack.com, 518-523-1818) at 2520 Main Street, in Lake Placid.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE GRAND ADIRONDACK HOTEL. POSTCARD FROM ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE



The Great Room, left, and Marcy Bar, pages 44–45, are cozy, Adirondack-style spaces. The redesigned hotel stays true to the bones of the original Marcy, built in the 1920s.

Ghosts
and
treasure
and
monsters,
oh my

Campfire *tales*

Illustrations by
Jesus Sotés

Lighting the Way

DURING MY TRAVELS of this wilderness domain on trapline and trail, I often came upon ancient blaze marks on giant trees. Some were overgrown by age, but the visible marks were always at the same height on the tree and the same size, as if made by the same ax. The blaze marks often followed along brooks, and I surmised they were made by some long ago trapper traveling in the days when this country was all virgin timber.

At every opportunity, I tried to locate his cabin, or its remains. One day, I decided to explore along Roaring Brook. After several miles, the brook had greatly reduced to "jump across" size and soon I came to a point where it forked. I was undecided which of the brooks to follow, when I spotted a blaze on a gnarled old cedar. On closer examination, I found a clear, cold stream coming from beneath its roots. As I followed along, it often disappeared completely beneath the forest floor, and if not for its gleeful gurgling, I would have lost it altogether. I can't begin to describe the excitement I felt as I stepped through a crack in a ledge that opened into a basin a half-acre in circumference, surrounded completely by ledges and cedar trees. Ax marks revealed that huge slabs of bark had been cut from them years ago to construct a shelter. I went on and soon came to the remains of an age-old cabin. The roof had long since caved in, but the cedar logs were still marvelously sound.

> I used the cabin for several years, and it seemed I felt the presence of the Old Trapper on many occasions, guiding me on my trips to the wilds.

The cabin's floor, made of split cedar, though mossed over and choked with dead leaves, was still sturdy. A half hour's work exposed it completely. In the center, where once stood a table, was a trap door. Upon opening it, I found a rocked-up spring. I had found the camp of my friend, the Old Trapper! After finding several dozen traps hanging in the hollow butt of a huge white pine, I estimated that he had made his camp there sometime around 1840.

After several days, I had new rafters in place. On another trip, I brought in tar paper to replace the cedar bark roof. The stove, made of cast iron, was still usable. With a new stovepipe and a window, the camp was re-established.

I used the cabin for several years, and it seemed I felt the presence of the Old Trapper on many occasions, guiding me on my trips to the wilds. Once, in a blinding snowstorm, just when I was about to settle for a cold night's camp but before starting my fire, I sensed the unmistakable smell of cedar smoke. Following it, I made my way to the cabin door, only to find the stove completely out, as I had left it that morning. But when I touched it, it was still warm.

—Richard Smith, an accomplished woodsman and close friend of Noah John Rondeau, shared this memory of a backwoods guardian angel in "The Trapper's Ghost" (October 1985)

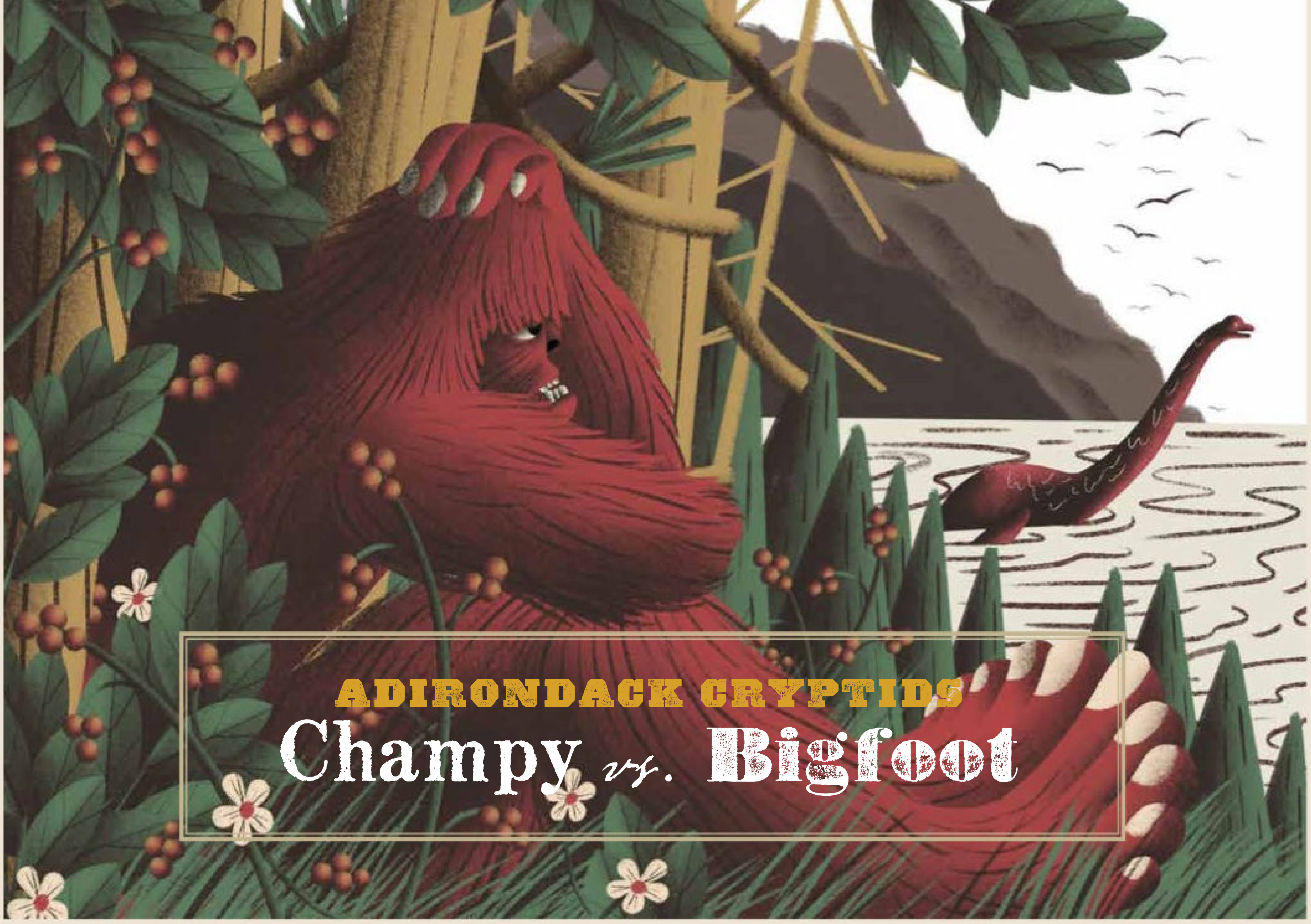
Not-so-deserted Island

WHEN STEVE REYNOLDS'S GRANDMOTHER went to her reward in 1942, her last words were, "Oh dear, can't I have another summer on the island?"

For years she arrived on Lake George's Recluse Island in May and stayed until October. And since her death, many guests and family members have experienced the strangest occurrences in her old upstairs bedroom. Some have described waking in the morning to see her face watching them from her mirror on the chest of drawers.

Though Reynolds has remained a skeptic, he related the day in 1974 his skepticism suffered a severe blow, when he brought a young woman and her four-year-old son to the island. "We docked—I tell you, this is weird; you're not going to believe this—I docked the boat down there and I carried a couple of bags up," he began. "I unlocked the door and went back for more bags." While he was gone the four-year-old ran into the front hall, where a spiral staircase rises to the second floor. "The boy came down to the dock and said, 'Who's the lady?' And I said, 'What lady?' He said, 'There's a lady standing on the circular stairs,' and I said, 'Well, why don't you go in and take another look.'" He did, and came back out and said, "Yes, there's a lady standing on the front stairs, smiling at me," and beckoning to him to follow her. Steve asked him what she looked like. "Well," Steve told me, "this guy described my grandmother absolutely to a tee," right down to the long purple dress she always wore, and of which the boy could have had no knowledge.

—adapted from "Dead and Gone to Your House," by Christopher Shaw (December 1987)



ADIRONDACK CRYPTIDS

Champy vs. Bigfoot

Lake Champlain Monster

DESCRIPTION: A Captain Crum, who navigated the lake in 1819, told a tale of an almost 200-foot-long black monster with three teeth and a star on its forehead. Sandra Mansi, the photographer behind a hotly debated 1977 image of "Champy," compared the creature to a dinosaur.

SIGHTINGS: More than 300 have been reported since 1819, including a 19th-century railroad crew whose possible group hallucination was covered in *The New York Times*. (Samuel D. Champlain's purported 1609 sighting of a huge critter with sharp teeth and silvery scales seems to have happened outside of his namesake waters.)

BOUNTY: P. T. Barnum offered $50,000 for Champy's hide in 1873 and $20,000 again in 1887. There were no takers.

LEGAL STATUS: In the 1980s, Champy was given protected status in both New York and Vermont.

PARTY AFFILIATION: Champ Day is celebrated in Port Henry each August.

ADIRONDACK SASQUATCH

DESCRIPTION: Generations of Adirondackers have described giant footprints and unexplained animalistic screams along with peeks at a massive, furry beast who travels upright through the wilderness—and bolts away when seen.

SIGHTINGS: According to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (yes, that's a thing), there have been more than 40 run-ins with a potential Sasquatch throughout the Adirondacks since the 1960s. The majority of sightings—in the entire state of New York—happen in Warren and Washington Counties. But the organization's most recently recorded Adirondack encounter was near Gabriels, in October 2022.

BOUNTY: Our Adirondack-based Bigfoot was never trendy enough to catch the fancy of P. T. Barnum.

LEGAL STATUS: Officially, New York State has taken no stance on the care and treatment of wayward Sasquatches.

PARTY AFFILIATION: Whitehall's Sasquatch Festival and Calling Contest happens every September.

POTENTIAL SPOILER: THE LAKE GEORGE MONSTER

In 1904 gawkers swamped the little community of Hague after New York City newspapers ballyhooed reports of a serpent-like creature stalking Lake George. It sounded fearsome, with jagged teeth and flashing green eyes, and it wasn't shy—sightings piled up day by day. But this monster was destined for the storybooks, not the record books. In 1934 artist Harry Watrous admitted to initially creating the beast, which was controlled with pulley lines, to prank a fishing rival.

OUT OF HAND

IN 1849 AUGUSTUS C. HAND, a leading attorney, one-term congressman, state senator and soon-to-be state judge, began construction of a stately new home in Elizabethtown, installing fine marble fireplaces, enormous windows, elaborate plaster ceiling ornaments and exceptional woodwork. The Hand House remains a showpiece to this day, home to the Bruce L. Crary Foundation and host to Piano by Nature and other community meetings and events.

But the place may be too lovely, since some residents don't want to leave. Over the years, numerous staff members and interns for the various nonprofit groups that have shared the space have reported odd happenings and sensations. Some saw glimpses of nonexistent people in mirrors or caught the scent of another person in an empty room. Doorknobs turned and stairs creaked when no one else was there.

In the summer of 1998 two young clergymen were staying in the house. During the night, one sensed that a person had entered the room and then felt the pressure of someone sitting on the bed. Then, to his horror, the full weight of a body bore down on him. This terrifying sensation lasted for several minutes, then the presence departed, closing the door.

Another episode repeated itself: When a woman staying in the house came back from lunch, she would leave her handbag on her bed and lock the door. When she returned at the end of the day and unlocked the door, her things would be carefully placed on the dresser. At first she thought she was mistaken, that she had put her purse on the chest of drawers. But another explanation soon surfaced. Walking through the house with William Savage, whose wife was a Hand, she unlocked the door, tossed her jacket and purse on the nicely made coverlet, and Savage said, "Mother would never stand for that. Once a bed was made, you did not put things on it."

—adapted from "Show of Hands," by Elizabeth Folwell (October 2003)

TREASURE IN THEM THAR HILLS

ONE OF THE MOST MYSTERIOUS ADIRONDACK HERMITS was Moses Follensby, who came to the Adirondacks around 1820 and built a lonely cabin on a pond now bearing his name, about four miles southeast of Tupper Lake. Follensby was supposed to have hidden a fortune—once estimated at $400,000—that has never been recovered. Some stories claim Follensby was a British army officer of noble birth who left his native country after discovering his wife was having an affair with a fellow officer.

Like other hermits, Follensby set a premium on privacy. His cabin had only one window, furnished with a stout oaken shutter, and his door was tightly secured with a massive lock of curious intricacy.

One crisp October day a sportsman and a trapper happened to meet at Follensby Pond while fishing. Nearing the hermit's cabin, they heard a loud voice, interspersed by shouts and screams, emanating from the inside. Rushing to the shack, they broke the door open.

In the dim light of the window they discerned Follensby, moaning and thrashing about on his crude bunk. Delirious with fever, he yelled at phan-

Continued on page 55

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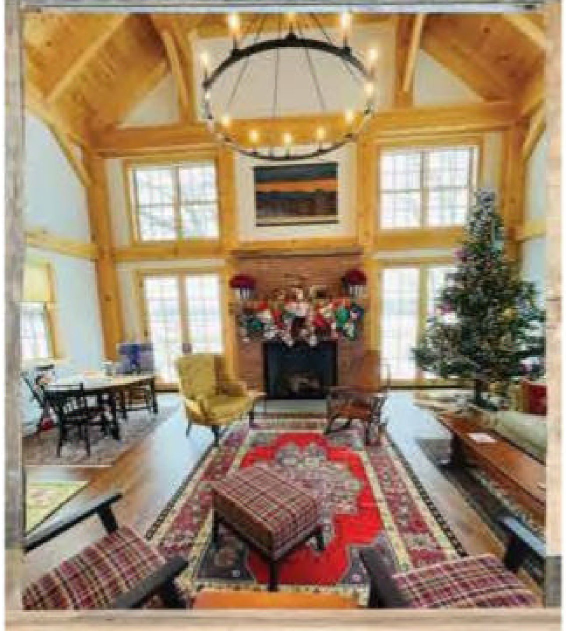

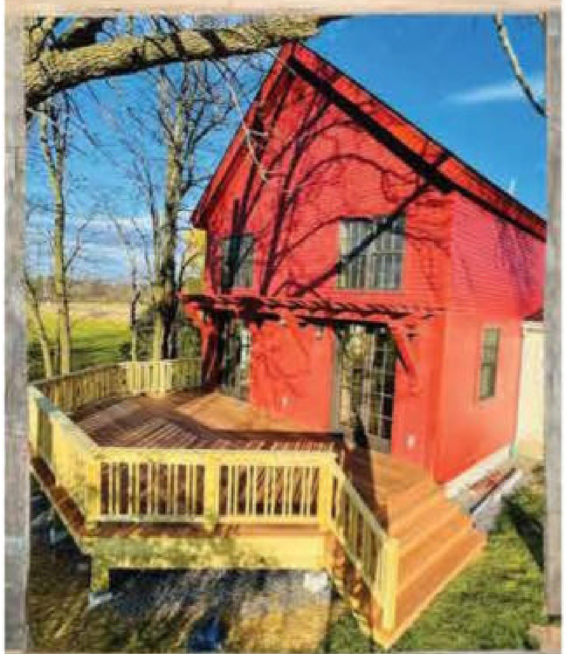

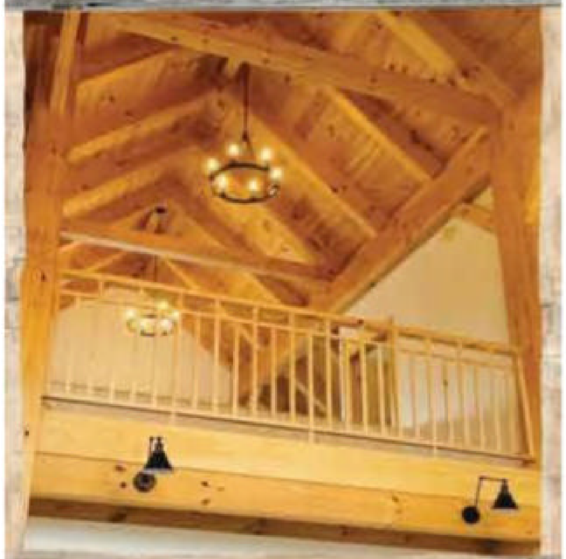

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CAMPFIRE TALES

Continued from page 53

tom persons, addressing them as Lord and General. He bellowed the name of Georgiana, calling down curses upon her. The crazed hermit also muttered confused references to a treasure chest. Rolling his mad eyes, he pointed to the stone fireplace. By the next morning he was dead.

Shortly after sunrise the two men buried him near his cabin, marking the grave with two large stones. Then they set to work removing the hearthstone. Beneath the heavy slab was a stout wooden chest. Inside was a magnificent sword in a gold scabbard. The sword's hilt was impressed with a coronet surrounded by diamonds. There was also a brace of handsome pistols and a case containing gold and gemmed toilet articles, along with a scarlet British uniform coat and gold-laced hat. At the bottom was a package of old letters, some signed Georgiana.

The two men stowed the chest in their canoe and headed for home. On their journey they stopped overnight at a hunter's shack on Lower Saranac Lake. The following morning the chest was missing. The hunter and trapper each accused the other of theft.

Perhaps the contents of the chest ended up at some remote trading post. What became of the alleged $400,000 in gold and silver coins said to have been hidden near the cabin is another mystery. The clues to this treasure might have been contained in the package of letters found in the chest. Could that package be lying in a long-forgotten trunk, stored in the attic of someone's Adirondack home? Will some lucky treasure-seeker discover that hoard of coins? *—adapted from "A Hermit's Lost Treasure," by Howard Duffy (April 1986)*

Strange but Untrue

DID AN ILL-FATED "Lady of the Lake" really turn to soap at the bottom of Lake Placid? In 1963 a group of divers, exploring caves more than a hundred feet below the surface, did discover the body of 56-year-old Mabel Smith Douglass, founder and for-

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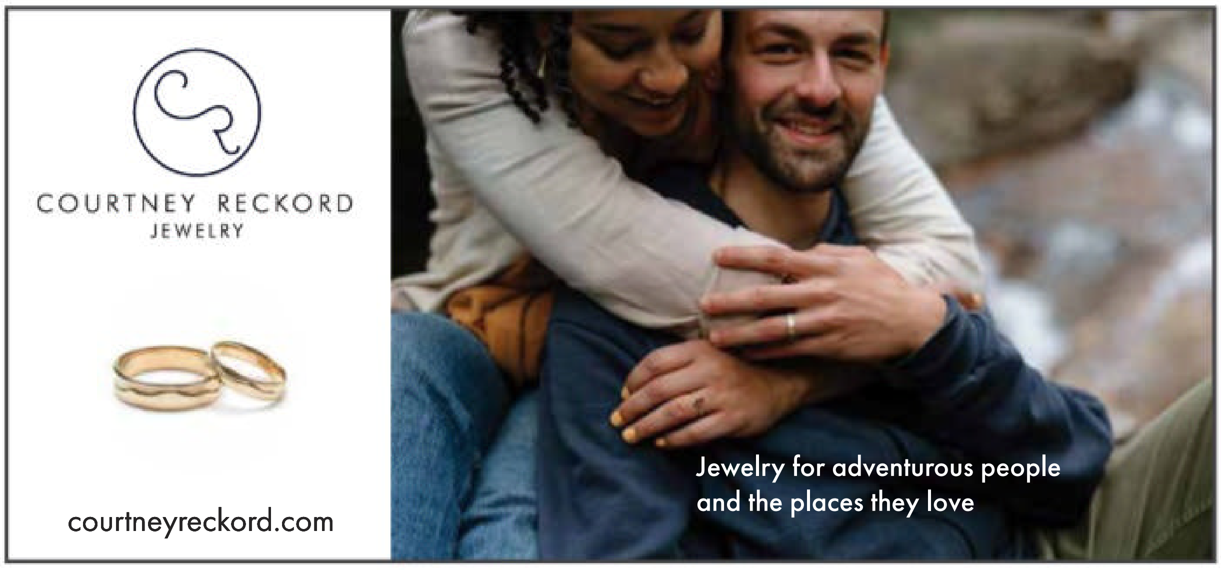

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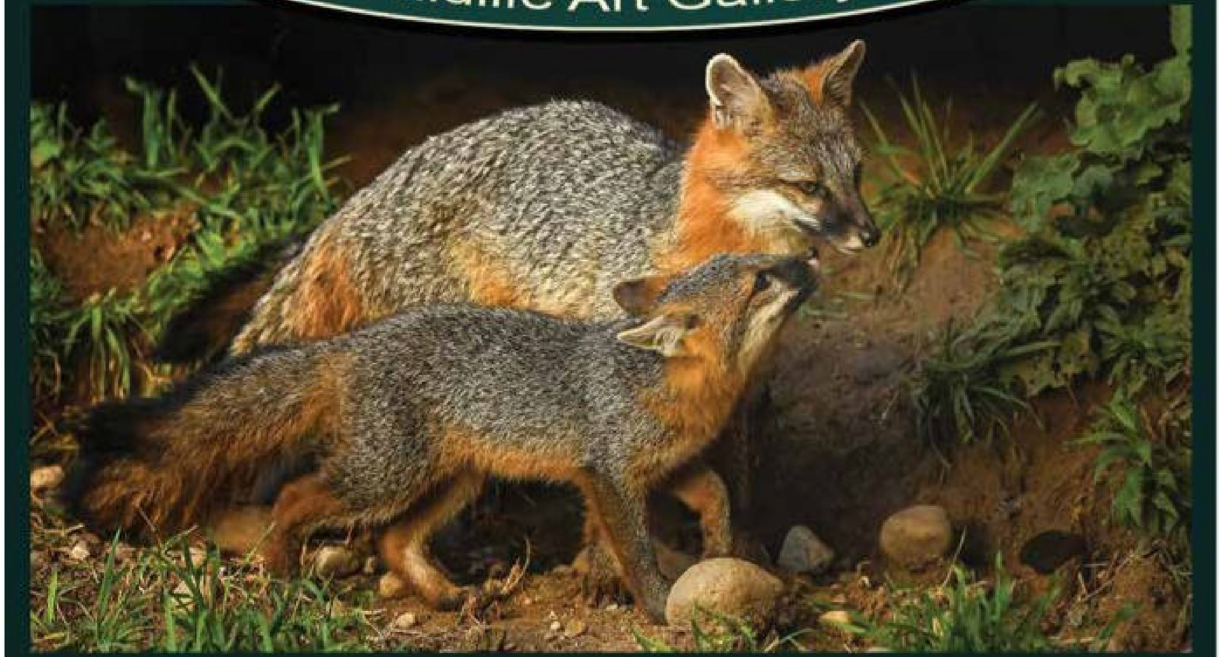

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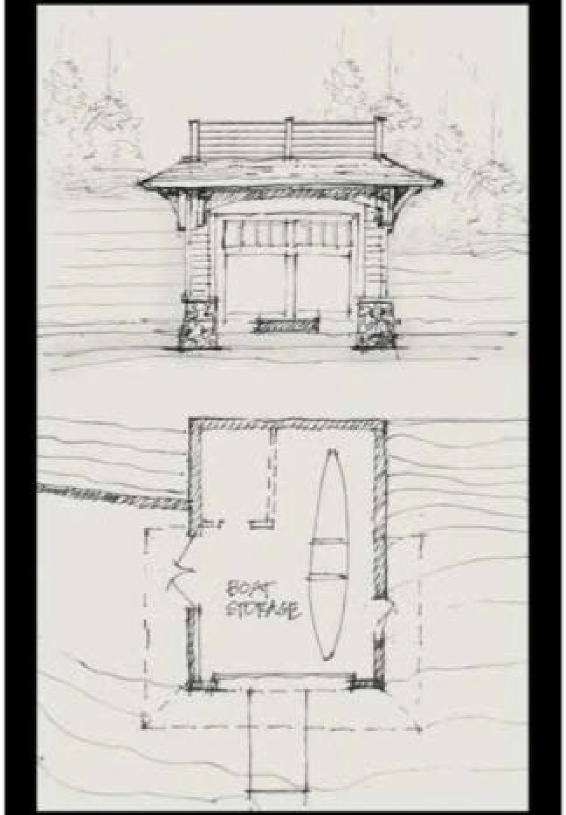

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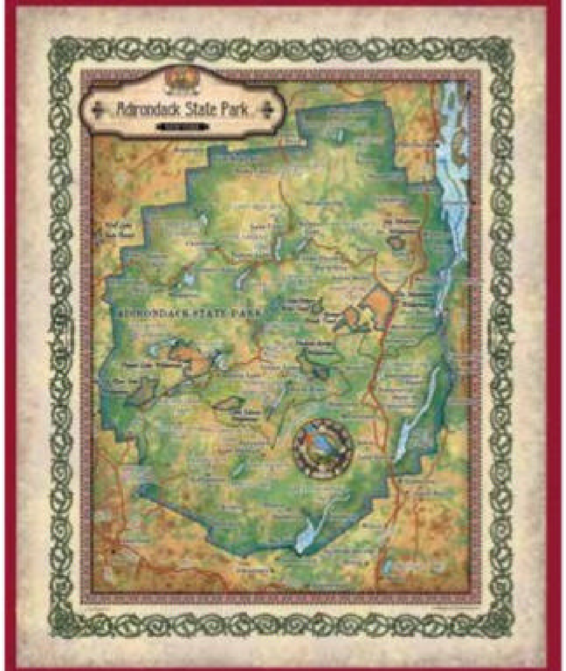

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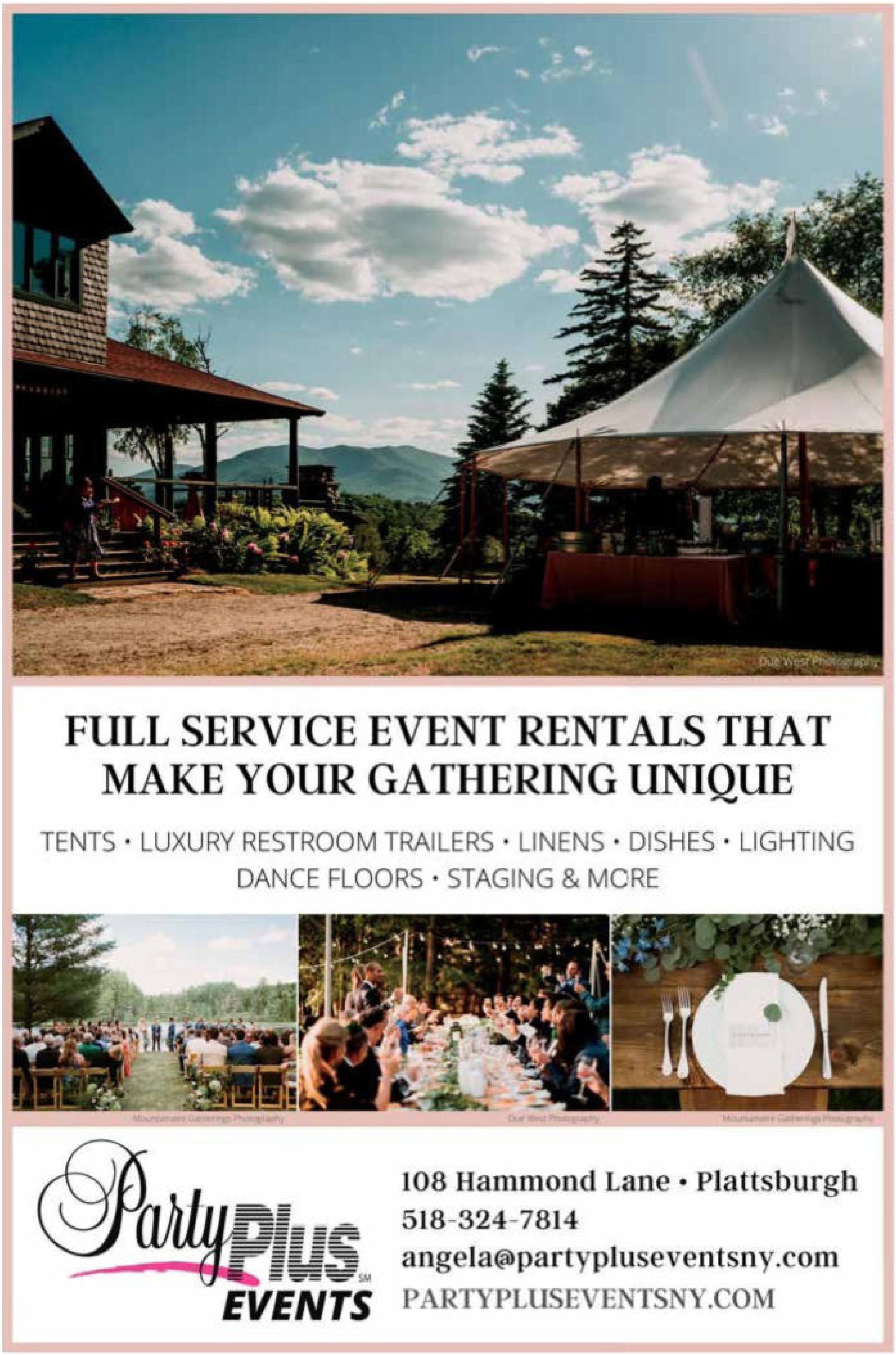
mer dean of the New Jersey College for Women at New Brunswick. Douglass, who had disappeared from her Camp Onondoga on the west shore of the lake 30 years earlier for reasons that are still a mystery, was found remarkably intact, with hardened skin that looked like wax or soap. Tour boat captains never tire of telling passengers how Douglass turned, essentially, to Dove.

But following an examination, pathologist James Utterback determined that the depth and extreme coldness of Douglass's resting place caused her body to undergo "a chemical transformation called adipocere formation" where "the fatty tissues of the human flesh mingling with chemical salts in the cold water would gradually become something very much like soap, only hard." Like soap, but not soap. *—adapted from "Rural Legends" (February 2007)*

Problematic Playdates

WHAT MAUREEN McCARGAR and her family have experienced in their 200-year-old Hopkinton home is every-single-hair-on-your-neck-erect, molar-clattering, full-blown spooky: toys that turn on without batteries, thermostats inexplicably cranked to the max, apparitions who make regular appearances. That's why Maureen called in a crew from the Northern New York Paranormal Research Society (NNYPRS) one Sunday afternoon a dozen years ago. The McCargar's house, built by Dr. Gideon Sprague, sat on land purchased from town founder Judge Roswell Hopkins. As the area doctor, his responsibilities were innumerable: treating the sick, delivering babies, dealing with the dead and attending to injuries. A cemetery once spanned from the neighbors' lot across the McCargars' backyard. But in the mid-19th century the remains were moved to a new cemetery about a mile north of the village. At least that's what was supposed to have happened.

NNYPRS's leader, Dale, investigated Sam McCargar's room. Maureen was pretty sure it was a haunted hot spot,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a place where her son Sam, then almost eight years old, had mentioned a boy who talked to him and sometimes poked him in the eye when he wanted to play.

When Sam began reporting those incidents, Maureen and her husband, Jared, figured he had an imaginary friend. Then Maureen experienced a late-night encounter with a woman dressed like a character from *Little House on the Prairie*. "She just stood at the door, looked at me, then turned right and walked down the hall," recalled Maureen. There were other freaky things: someone tapping Maureen's shoulder when she was in the shower; the curtains in the upstairs hall window constantly pushed open. Maureen believes that five-year-old Carson, who had breathing problems as an infant, was saved because "someone" tapped hard on his dresser until she ran to his room and was able to rush him to the hospital. After all of this, the McCargars had to believe their son.

Dale certainly did. She said the boy upstairs was "a sweet, dark-haired, dark-eyed six- or seven-year-old." His name was Philip and he died of pneumonia in the house, perhaps more than a century ago. Philip told Dale, who crouched before Sam's small, tidy bed, that he and his mom slept in Dr. Sprague's chilly attic in exchange for helping around the homestead.

This was a happy spirit, said Dale, but she worried he had an unhealthy attachment to Sam. (Philip told her he was anxious for Sam to return home from his grandparents' hunting camp; Maureen insisted she never shared her son's weekend whereabouts.)

Once the investigators were gone the McCargars, minus Sam, who was upstairs unpacking from the weekend, were unwinding in the living room. Jared had a long day at work; Maureen was overwhelmed from her afternoon. Soon Sam made his way downstairs. He chatted with his parents about his time with his grandparents, then said, "Mommy, I have to tell you something. The little servant boy is back." *—adapted from "A Hopkinton Haunting," by Annie Stoltie (October 2008)*

ADIRONDACK LIFE

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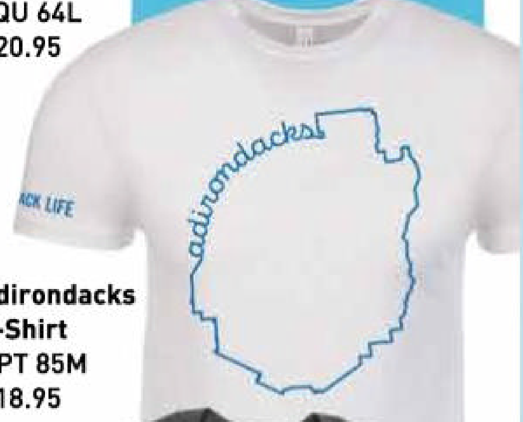
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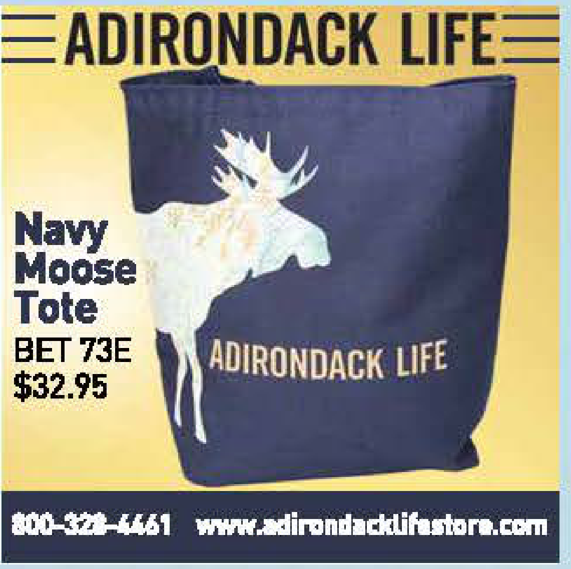
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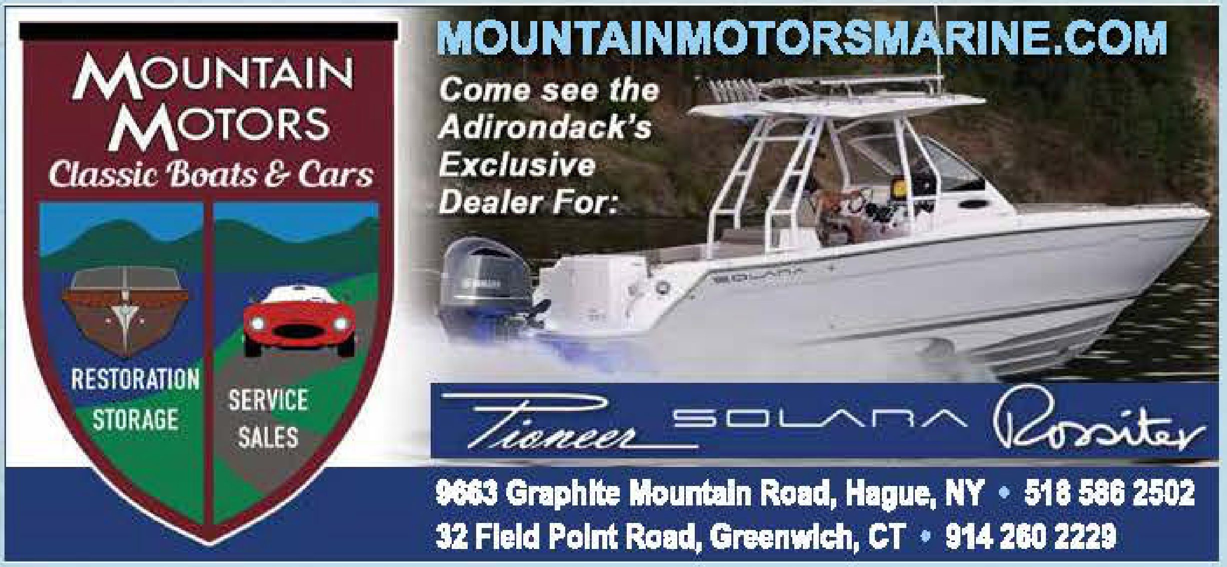
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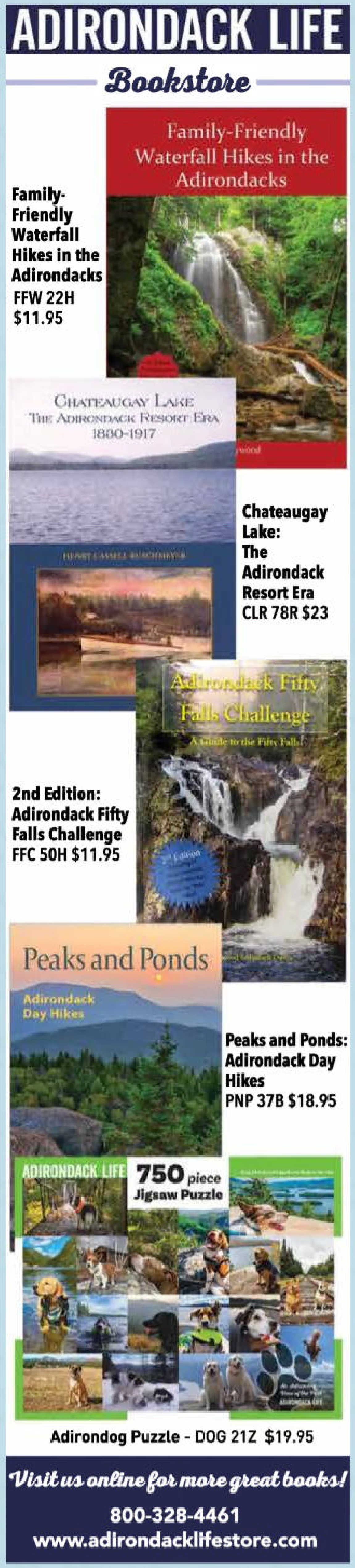
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Backpacking Lite

Pine Lake
Essex Chain Lakes Complex

This 3.7-mile trek into Pine Lake is light on drama—more of a pleasant stroll through the woods than a hike—but the journey leads to a beautiful backcountry lake that you'll probably have all to yourself. There's one designated tent site at the shore, with a picnic table and open-air privy. (A site across the lake is reserved for floatplanes.) Bring your fishing pole—the Department of Environmental Conservation reports that there are brook trout gliding through these waters.

For a bonus trip to another pretty shore, take the detour to Clear Pond that intersects the trail after about a mile. It's 0.3 mile to the water's edge.

If You Go: The trail to Pine Lake starts at the end of Chain Lakes Road, in Indian Lake. The route—once a Finch, Pruyn logging road—is open to bicycles, though there are some hills to navigate. Follow the blue trail markers until the junction with Cedar River trail at 2.7 miles; take a left and follow the yellow markers for the last mile.

Moss Lake Loop
Fulton Chain Wild Forest

This popular 2.5-mile loop asks for little in the way of effort but gives a lot

ADIRONDACK CAMPING PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL HEILMAN II

in return. The trail provides a pleasant mix of both woodsy and water scenes, with a sandy beach and wildlife viewing platform near its start. Primitive campsites with privies are scattered around the loop; the two closest to the parking area are ADA accessible.

If You Go: From Route 28, in Eagle Bay, turn onto Big Moose Road. The parking area will be another 2 miles on the left.

With a Paddle

Lake Lila/Frederica Mountain
William C. Whitney Wilderness

Though this stunning 1,400-acre lake is completely surrounded by Forest Preserve, it's still close enough to civilization for a quick in and out. To get the most from your visit, add a 3-mile round trip to the top of Frederica Mountain for lovely lake-and-mountain views.

There are 24 primitive campsites with privies around the lake; the Frederica Mountain trailhead is closest to sites 8 and 9.

If You Go: From Route 30, take Sabattis Circle Road 3 miles to Sabattis Road, then continue 4.5 miles to Lake Lila Access Road. Parking is 5.6 miles down the rough dirt road. The lake is a 0.3-mile carry from the parking area.

Cheney Pond
Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

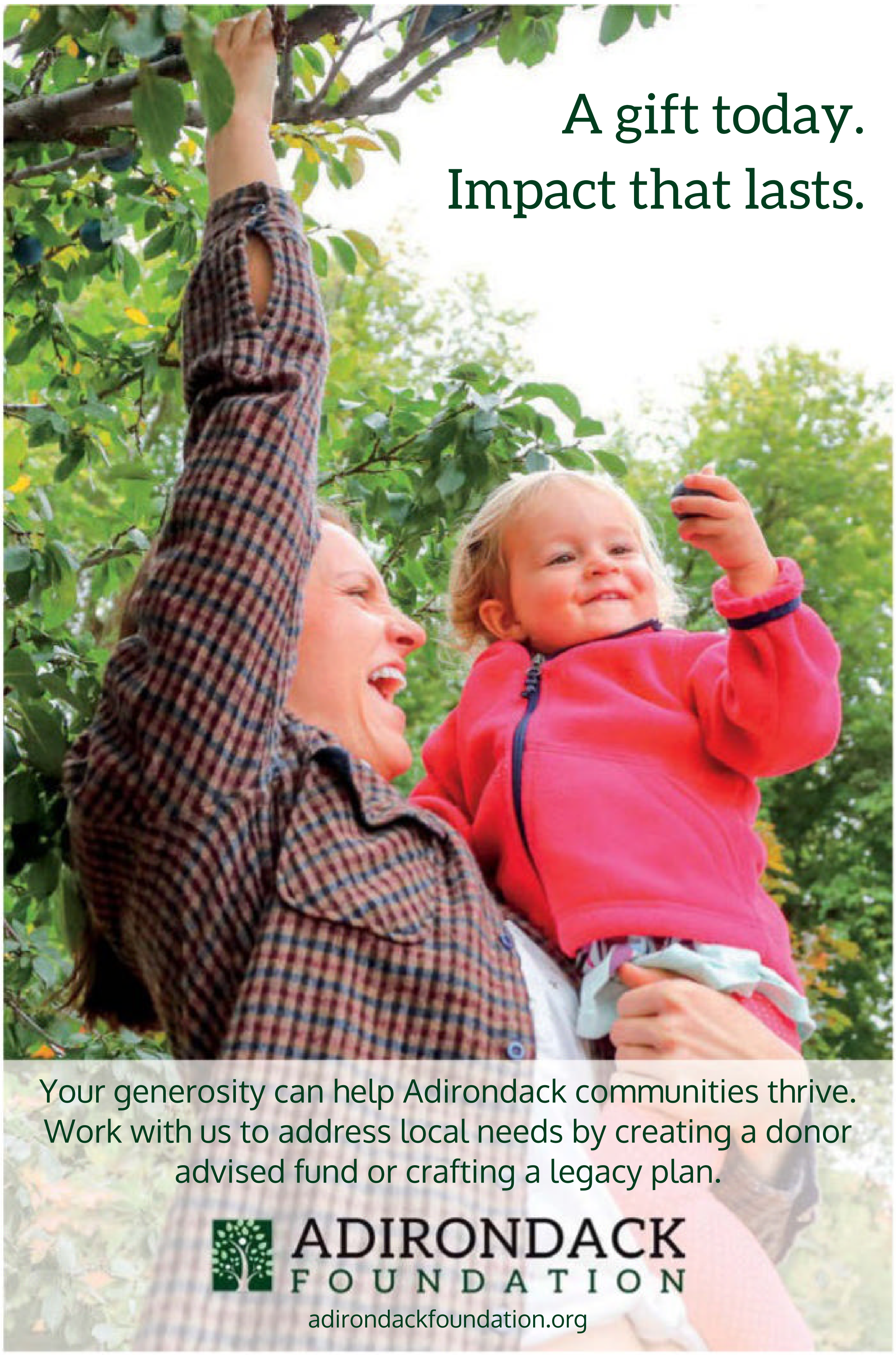
To enjoy the feeling of deep wilderness without all the bother of getting there, try this little paddle near Newcomb. It's just a half-mile walk (or drive, if you have a sturdy, high-clearance vehicle) from the trailhead and there are a handful of shore-side camping spots, including one paddle-in site with a lean-to and nice sandy beach.

If You Go: Take Exit 29 off I-87 and follow Blue Ridge Road toward Newcomb for approximately 13.5 miles. Parking is on the left.

Glamping It Up

OK Slip Falls
Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area

For a manageable day-trip with an over-the-top reward—a 200-plus-foot waterfall—take the 6-mile round trip to OK Slip Falls, near North River. If you're up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for more adventure—and you have the chops—you can add the more strenuous 0.8-mile hike across OK Slip Brook above the falls and down the gorge to the river.

After a day on the trail, rough it in style in one of **North River Hobby Farm**'s tricked-out platform tents. There's a communal fire pit, plus grills and a shared kitchen space. Bonus: you can soak away the day while you take in the views from the cedar hot tub, which can be rented by the hour.

If You Go: To hike to OK Slip Falls, park on Route 28, 7.5 miles east of the hamlet of Indian Lake. The trailhead is 0.2 mile west of the parking area. Follow trail signs for 3.1 miles to the OK Slip overlook. North River Hobby Farm (518-812-7770, www.northriverhobbyfarm.com) is 4.5 miles from the trailhead, at 83 Cemetery Road, in North River.

Matters of State

Debar Mountain

Debar Mountain Wild Forest

Climbing Debar Mountain is a project, which is why it's good to have a site at **Meacham Lake State Campground** reserved for the end of the trail—especially if it's appointed with a well-stocked beer cooler. (This climb is thirsty work.) The hike is 3.7 miles one way, with a steep final half-mile to the top. But the view of the northwestern Adirondacks makes it all worthwhile, and you can follow the workout with a dip at the campground's beach.

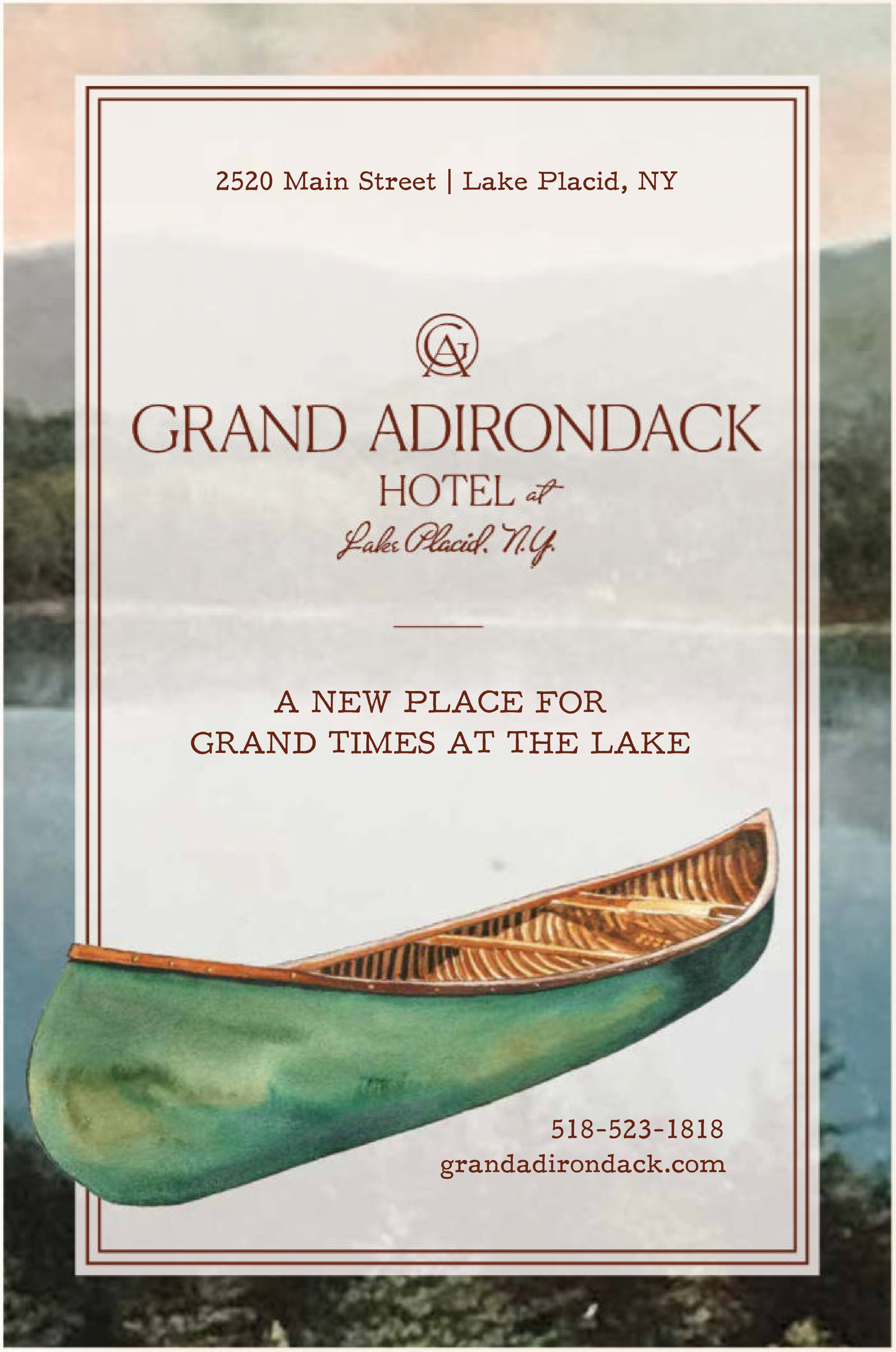
If You Go: Find Meacham Lake Campground on Route 30, 12 miles north of Paul Smiths. The trailhead for Debar Mountain is near site 37; turn onto a sandy road and keep to the right. You will reach a gravel pit on your left after about a half mile. Park at the pit and sign the trail register.

Bear Mountain

Cranberry Lake Wild Forest

A much easier—and kid-friendly—option is Bear Mountain's 2.4-mile loop, with a bird's-eye view of Cranberry Lake. The outing is short and sweet, leaving plenty of time to take in the scene at **Cranberry Lake State Campground**.

If You Go: Find Cranberry Lake Camp-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ground on Route 3, just east of the hamlet of Cranberry Lake. The Bear Mountain trail starts near site 27.

Room and Not Bored

Bushnell Falls
Eastern High Peaks Wilderness

Getting to **Johns Brook Lodge**, a 28-bed no-frills hostel in the heart of the High Peaks, is a journey by itself—a 3.5-mile tramp from the Garden parking lot, in Keene Valley. For an overnighter, that doesn't leave much time for more exploring. Luckily there's Bushnell Falls waiting a mere 1.5 miles from the lodge, with its pristine—and picturesque—swimming hole. Back at the lodge, you can look forward to a family-style dinner and an evening of story swapping with your fellow adventurers.

If You Go: From Route 73, in Keene Valley, turn onto Adirondack Street. Follow signs to the Garden parking lot, about 2 miles from Route 73. Take the yellow marked Phelps trail from the trail register. Past Johns Brook Lodge, a spur trail leads to the base of the falls. Reserve a bunk in the lodge at adk.org.

Viall's Crossing Trail
Westport

This 2.5-mile Champlain Area Trails (CATS) trek can be hiked on its own or as part of the 5-mile Westport Trail loop that begins and ends in the village. There's history here: Asa Viall, whose family settled Viall's Crossing Farm, drove the wagon that took his friend John Brown's body to his final resting place in North Elba.

If you base yourself at the **Westport Lakeside Motel**, the trailhead is a mile stroll through this quiet Adirondack community. The trail ends on Sherman Road, where you can hike the Woods & Swale trail or take the road back to the motel. Find a map at www.champlainareatrails.com or pick one up at the CATS office, 6482 Main Street, in Westport.

If You Go: The south trailhead is behind Westport Storage & U-Haul. The Lakeside Motel (518-962-4501, www.westportlakesidemotel.com) is at 80 Champlain Avenue.

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Secret Society

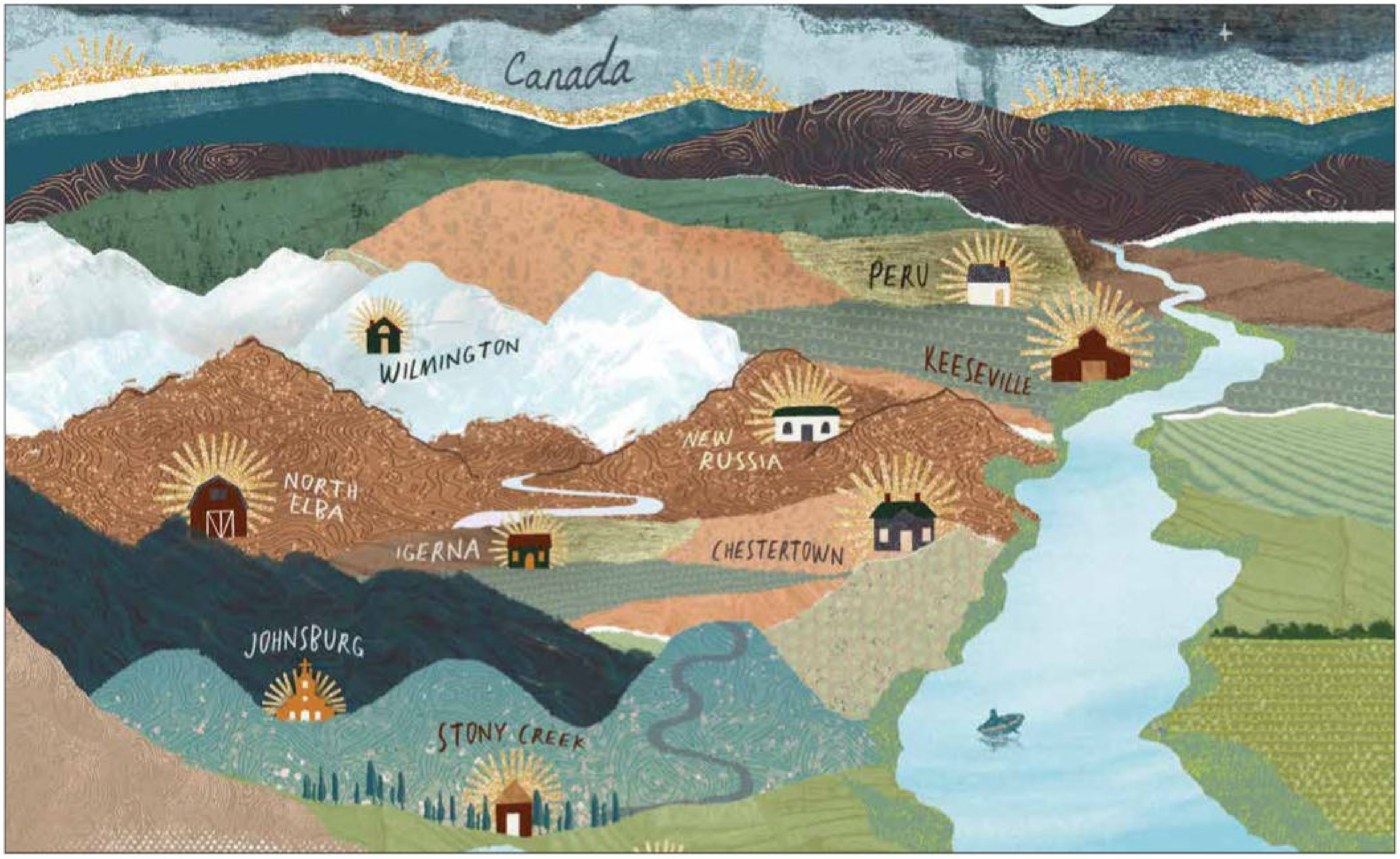
Tracing the Underground Railroad through the Adirondacks

BY NIKI KOUROFSKY

History is a slippery thing. It can be tempting to accept local lore as fact or take the written word as gospel, especially when the same snippets have been recorded in multiple sources. But the past remains unknowable, and its recorders have more in common with scientists than transcriptionists. Some theories are indisputable (think: gravity) and some, like dark matter, remain educated guesses. Still, taken together, a historian's tools—documents, physical evidence, even generational memory and other less reliable sources—can get us close to the truth.

Take one of the stories that Tom Calarco, author of *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region*, uncovered in Edinburg. The tiny community a couple dozen miles northwest of Saratoga Springs—itself a hive of antislavery activity—boasted a strong abolitionist bent in the years leading up to the Civil War. According to town gossip, the former post office had been a stop on the Underground Railroad, complete with a hidey-hole to shelter fugitives. Nobody had ever found proof of that refuge, though. Not until the owner of an antiques store across the street was taking out shelving and discovered a hidden room. Research showed that the building had been an even older post office, active between 1849 and 1857, and doubled as the home of the postmaster, a prominent abolitionist. So the community grapevine may have been right after all, though the location was slightly off.

If history is tricky, nailing down the whos and wheres of the Underground Railroad—with its reliance on secrecy—is even trickier. Calarco, who also authored *The Underground Railroad Conductor: A Guide for Eastern New York* and *The Search for the Underground Railroad in Upstate New York*, used a fixed set of criteria to evaluate possible stops on the Underground Railroad. He gave the most weight to contemporary accounts,



In the dark of night, operatives throughout the region helped freedom seekers escape to Canada.

ILLUSTRATION BY GWEN JAMISON VOGEL

especially first-person narratives, as well as a homeowner's membership in antislavery organizations. Less convincing were third-party accounts recorded after the fact and local legend, although those leads could jump-start further inquiry.

Below are some of Calarco's most compelling cases from his decades of research.

Corinth to Thurman

A cabin on a mountain near Corinth, home to a Mr. Fitch, was identified as an Underground Railroad stop in a scrapbook Calarco unearthed at the Saratoga County historian's office. The narrative detailed a route that started at a safe house near Ballston Center: "the route continued … thru the wilderness to Black Pond, west of Corinth, thence along a blazed trail for about two miles to a little cottage owned by a Negro named Fitch. His house was an oft frequented station. For a day or two the slaves would rest at the Fitch home and then be guided by their host past Lake Efnor, down the outlet to the Sacandaga River. From here they went through a section known as the Allentown, thence to Newton Farm, Hadley Hill continuing easterly for about five miles to Stony Creek and thence to a cottage near Thurman Station and on to the border."

Calarco spoke with locals who'd known of Fitch, one of whom led him to the remnants of Fitch's isolated dwelling on a mountain between Corinth and what is now Great Sacandaga Lake.

Greenfield to Luzerne

The 1849 memoir of Lydia Frances Sherman, of Hadley, recalled her family's involvement with the Underground Railroad: "The first station after leaving Saratoga was in Greenfield at the house of Mason Anthony, a good Quaker abolitionist. Friend Anthony would bring the escaped man after dark to our house in Hadley. The next night my father would take him to the house of Uncle Henry Beach, in Luzerne, Warren County, six miles away. From that station he would be taken to a place near Lake George, and so on.

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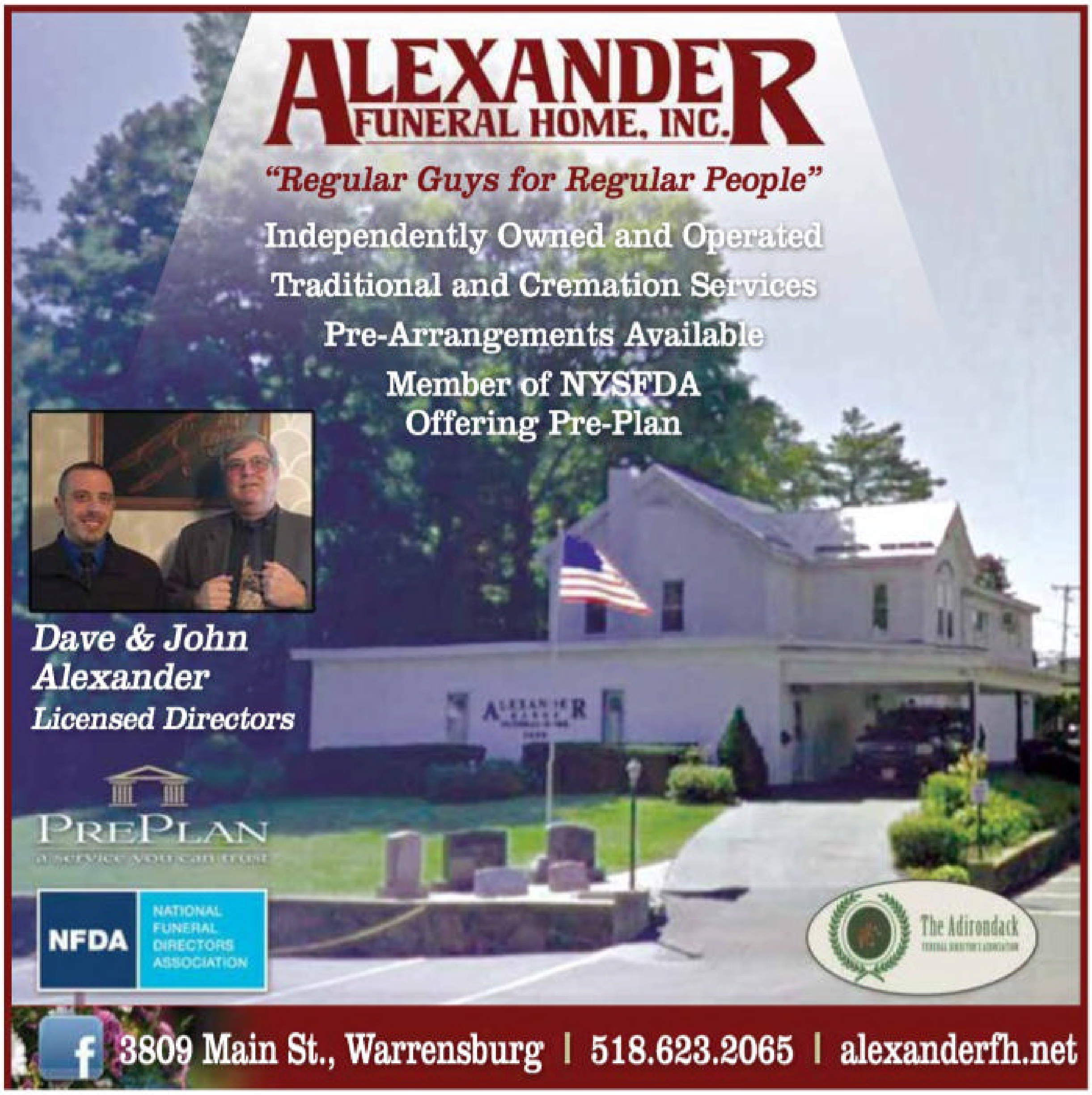
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"At one time we kept a fugitive about the house several days before we dared pass him along, as a reward for his capture was posted in every village and at every post office, and plenty of pro-slavery men were eager for the reward. Fortunately … my married sister came home on a visit, bringing with her a young infant. They dressed the slave in women's clothes, with a heavy veil, put in his arms a large doll, well wrapped up to look like a baby, and my mother drove with him to Grandfather Wilcox's who lived near Uncle Henry Beach.

"On their way they had to pass through the village of Luzerne, and the ten minutes spent in transit caused them much anxiety, for fear that some friend might stop to speak to them, as often happened when my mother went to visit her father."

Johnsburg

Descendants of Reverend Enos Putnam, a Wesleyan-Methodist minister, maintain that his Garnet Lake Road farm was a haven for runaway slaves, adding that fugitives would arrive hidden in hay wagons and often stay at the farm awaiting the next moonless night. Lucia Newell Oliver, Putnam's adopted daughter and mother of poet Jeanne Robert Foster, recalled seeing a freedom seeker when she was six years old.

"I came down the stairs in my nightgown. Father was just opening the cellar door. He had a lighted candle in one hand and a plate of food in the other. He did not see me and I followed him part way down the cellar stairs. He set the plate of food on a box and unlocked the door of a room in the cellar where mother kept her preserves. I could see from my perch, two or three steps down, that there was a kind of bed in the room and a young man, very black, sat on it. I was frightened for I had never seen a black man before and I hurried to go back to bed."

Darrowsville, Chestertown and Igerna

In nearby Darrowsville, another Wesleyan-Methodist reverend was rumored to have hidden fugitives in his parsonage. A Clinton County historian who researched Reverend Thomas Baker said that the minister would escort fugitives to New Russia, where other agents would take them on to Keene, Wilmington or North Elba.

Between Darrowsville and Chestertown, Quaker Joseph Leggett operated a possible stop on Route 9. In a written history of the Leggett house, which still stands, Leggett's son described seeing fugitives in his home at night.

Farther along Route 9, north of Chestertown, modern renovations at the former home of Judge Tyrrell uncovered a hidden space housing a cot, water pitcher, candle, blanket and bible, among other articles. In the 1840s Tyrrell had attracted the attention of Gerrit Smith, who praised Tyrrell's support of the abolitionist cause.

Northwest of Chestertown, near the forgotten community of Igerna, a Black settler named Mr. Cutler was rumored to harbor fugitives in his cabin on Ethan Mountain. From there, freedom seekers may have headed to Ogdensburg via an old military road.

Peru

There was a healthy abolitionist community in Peru, thanks to the Keese clan and many of their Quaker neighbors. In an 1887 interview, Stephen Keese Smith admitted there were stations in the town, adding that "Samuel Keese was the head of the depot in Peru. His son, John Keese, myself, and Wendell Lansing were actors. I had large buildings and concealed the negros in them. I kept them, fed them. Often gave them shoes and clothing."

Keese Smith's great-granddaughter, Virginia Burdick, said that her father remembered seeing fugitives in his grandfather's kitchen: "The slaves came into the kitchen to be fed. They were chattering with the cold, and the firelight would light up their dark, startled, terrified faces." The Keese Smith homestead, on Union Road, still stands.

Keese collaborator Wendell Lansing, publisher of the *Essex County Republican*, was listed as an Underground Railroad agent in his obituary. His Wilmington farm was another suspected station.

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Night Vision

The language of light helps fireflies find love in the dark

BY CURT STAGER

The silent flashing code of fireflies signals availability to potential mates.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM SHUTTERSTOCK

Yellow-green sparks shimmer among shadowy pines overlooking my backyard on the outskirts of Saranac Lake. It is a warm June evening, and the humid air hangs heavy with the fragrance of mountain maple blossoms and last year's fallen pine needles. More such flashes beckon from the quiet tree-lined road that circles Moody Pond, and I follow.

As my eyes adjust to the darkness, the smooth pond on my left becomes smoked glass with a ragged black rim of mirrored forest that is sparsely dotted with porch lights and the occasional streetlamp. Above and below the rim, countless stars glisten amid the spilled milk of our galaxy, where fireflies who stray from shore resemble wandering meteors.

Frogs call from dark beds of pickerelweed along the shore, their voices bouncing up from the pond surface with the starlight. The green frogs *plunk* in variable sequences like pebbles skipping on water, while the bullfrogs grunt more slowly, as if sawing low notes from a cello. These are songs of love, or whatever passes for it among frogs. They also warn competitors and misguided suitors from differing species to back off. The sparkling fireflies do much the same in a language of light.

Such signals can draw attention from predators as well as amorous mates, and these night-displays strike an ancient balance between survival and the drive to reproduce. For frogs and fireflies alike, signaling in darkness helps to even the odds by avoiding daytime hunters.

The flashes grow more numerous as I approach an alder swamp that funnels runoff from Mount Baker into the pond. Some glow briefly and wink out, then reappear elsewhere on meandering paths. Others flash three times in rapid succession or draw long curved dashes. These silent codes are precisely orchestrated by the instincts of each species and serve as passwords. The ones used by cruising males elicit proper responses only from females of their own kind, who typically answer from perches in the vegetation below.

Technically, fireflies are beetles rather than flies, and as such they protect their delicate flight wings with sturdy covers when at rest. More than 2,000 species of them share the planet with us, including day-active “dark fireflies” who do not glow at all and instead seduce their paramours with alluring odors. Among the night-fliers, the flashes arise from cells within the tip of the abdomen that are packed with reactive molecules called luciferins—as in Lucifer, the bringer-of-light in Roman mythology. The luciferins release a glow powered by enzymes, chemical energy from the insects’ food, and oxygen from their breath, somewhat like flint striking fire from steel but without the heat.

Through time immemorial the inherited codes have reduced cross-breeding and sustained the kinds of diversity on display here. Judging by the number of flash patterns around me, at least four species of firefly cruise the margins of Moody Pond tonight, broadcasting the love songs of their ancestors.

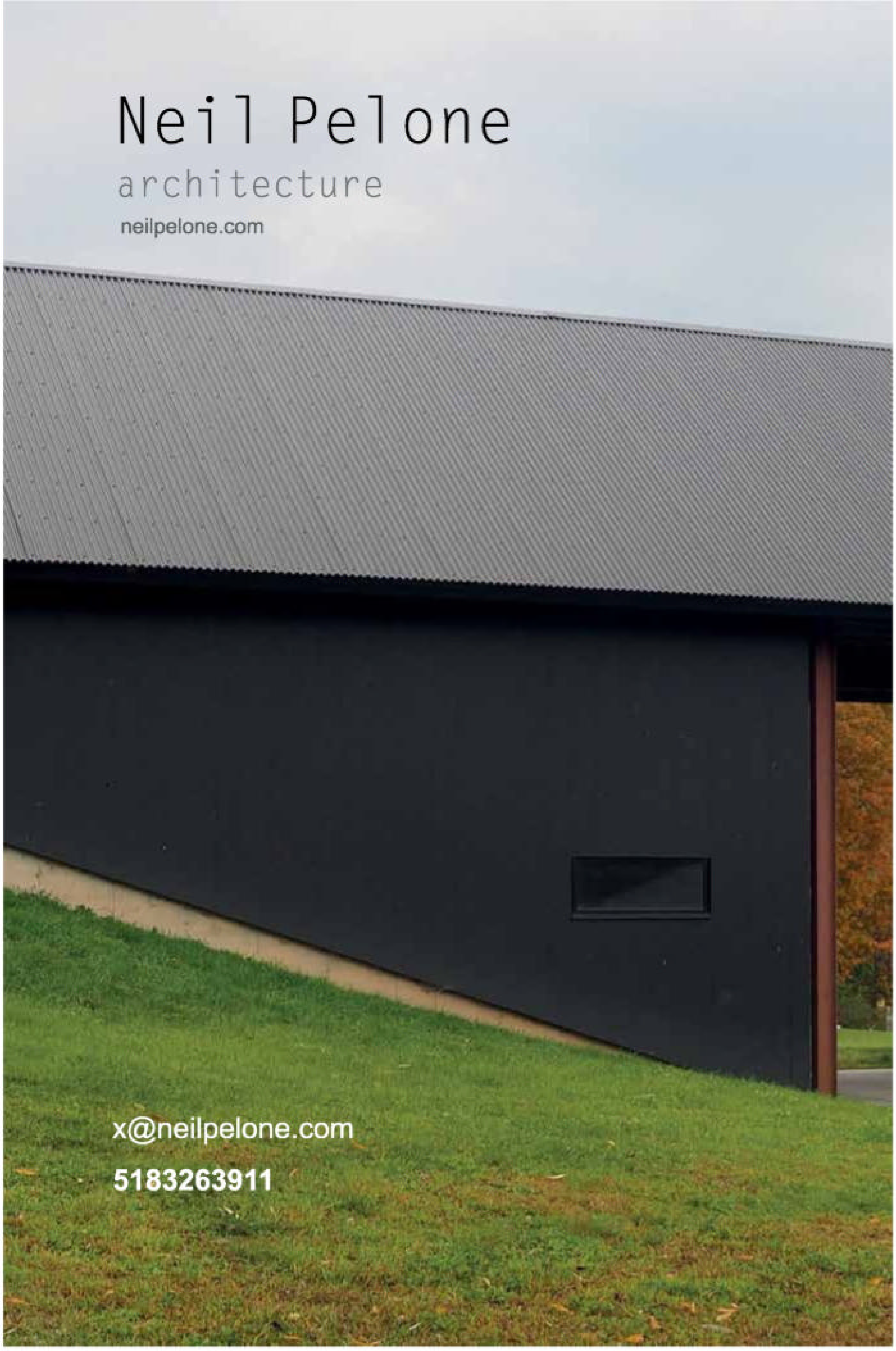
One slow-flying male trails a line of triple sparks where a strip of uncut meadow borders the road. I pause to watch his signals against the black backdrop. A brief glimmer from the vegetation below conveys a female’s interest. His flying dots angle down toward the female, who responds promptly to each triplet.

“Here I am,” he seems to say to her. “Here I am.”

“Hi,” she winks back.

He lands near her, still triple-pulsing to her singles. I sidle closer too. Then both lanterns go out and stay out. I wait a long moment, kneel slowly, and press the button of my penlight.

The artificial light reveals a pair of *Photinus* fireflies fully engaged amid a dark tangle of grasses and goldenrods festooned with amber-colored land snails and wisps of spider silk. The pair is attached tail to tail on a goldenrod



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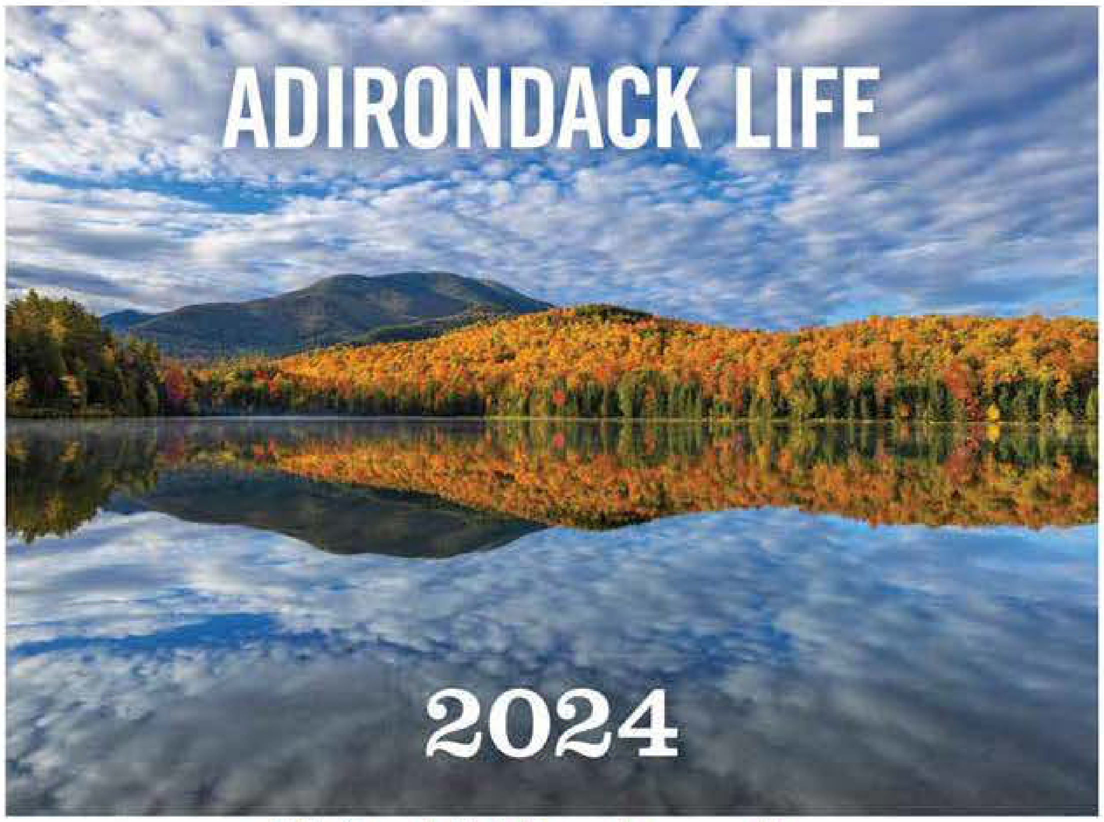

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leaf, each of them no larger than a sunflower seed. Their charcoal wing covers are neatly folded and edged in yellow, and their shoulders wear a gold-rimmed shield with a dab of crimson on it. Delicate antennae protrude from beneath each shield and twitch eagerly while slim legs tipped with tiny claws grip the edges of the leaf.

The male is delivering sperm as one might expect, but his genetic investment in the next generation comes with a bonus. Transferred along with it is a dash of nutritious amino acids, a nuptial gift that will be built into his partner's developing eggs and give them a head start in life.

I turn the penlight off and leave the couple to their business. Several days from now the impregnated female will lay her eggs in damp soil along the edge of the swamp. When they hatch, the voracious, luminous larvae will hunt snails and earthworms in the miniature jungle beside the road. A year or two later the grubs will metamorphose into winged adults with only a few weeks of life remaining in which to mate and replace themselves in the population.

The flash-language also speaks of things other than love. The glow of larvae and adults alike warns predators that the animals taste bad. Toxic defensive compounds help to protect them from within, and sticky, noxious fluids can also ooze from legs, neck or wings if a hungry frog or spider attacks. But one of the more astonishing aspects of firefly communication is that it can also be used to deceive. My next encounter shows how an insect can lie with light.

As I turn away from the mating *Photinus*, a lone spark flickers nearby. This flash is a bit brighter than the others, and it pulsates more erratically. I creep nearer and click my penlight on again.

Clinging head-down to a grass stem is a firefly nearly twice the size of the *Photinus*. She has a lemon-yellow head, black poppyseed eyes, and a more hunched, yellow-rimmed shoulder shield. She aims the tip of her abdomen upward, ready to ignite again after I douse my own.

This is *Photuris*, a bachelor firefly's

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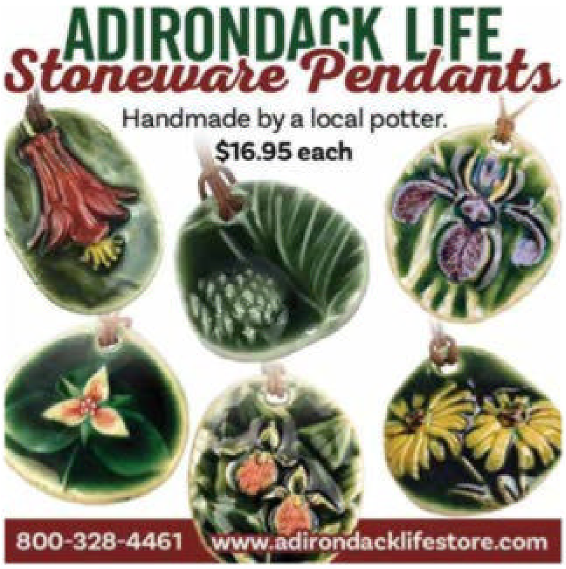
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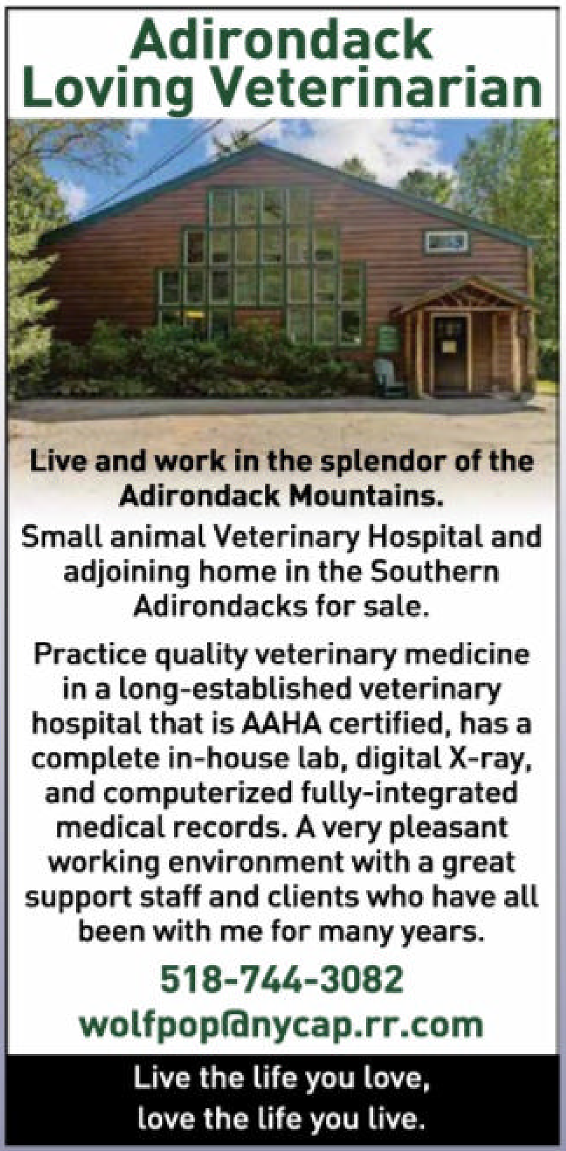
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worst nightmare. She is trying to trick a male *Photinus* into courting her, but her lamp is a deadly trap. A deluded suitor who answers may soon join her for dinner—as the main course. Most fireflies are carnivorous and some, like *Photuris*, use their flashes to attract other fireflies as prey, not mates. If she so desires, this female might also steal snacks from a spider's web or hunt on the wing by following the courtship flashes of her victim, but tonight her lantern is a lure to disaster.

In the larger saga of evolution, these languages of light can define, maintain and delude firefly species of many kinds. Today, however, streetlamps, billboards, headlights, bright windows and house lights bleach the stars from urban night skies and overwhelm the more muted displays of fireflies. Visual courtship flights in that stark artificial glow are like whispers in a noisy construction site.

Fortunately, the silent sparks that surround me tonight still have a suitably dark setting to fly in, but now that I have met some of them I wonder about their individual fates as I walk slowly home. How many of the *Photinus* couple's brood will survive to make courtship flights of their own? Will I find some of them here in the future?

And what of the *Photuris* huntress? Will her next target glue her mouthparts shut with toxic goop and escape? Will she fall prey to a marauding spider who will ambush her in the darkness and bind her, paralyzed but still glowing, with a leash of silk to a goldenrod leaf? Or, as usually happens, will she devour a male *Photinus* tonight and recycle his chemical defenses into her own body, later to bequeath them as molecular protection to her eggs?

Only the fireflies of Moody Pond will ever know.

Learn more about the threats facing firefly populations worldwide—including habitat degradation and loss, pesticide use, climate change and light pollution—and what can be done to help them, from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, www.xerces.org.

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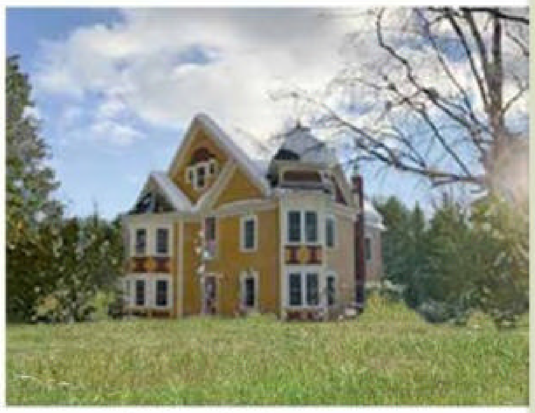

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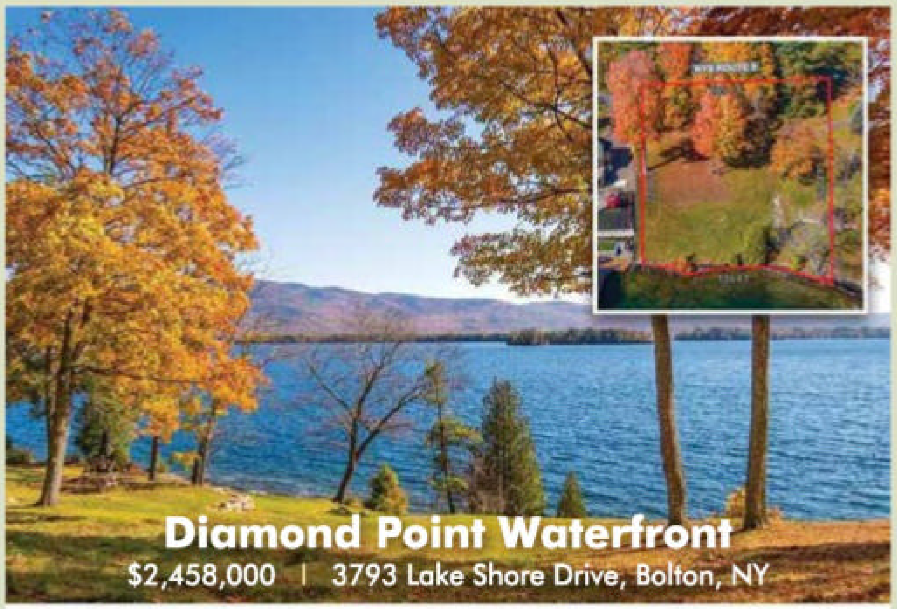

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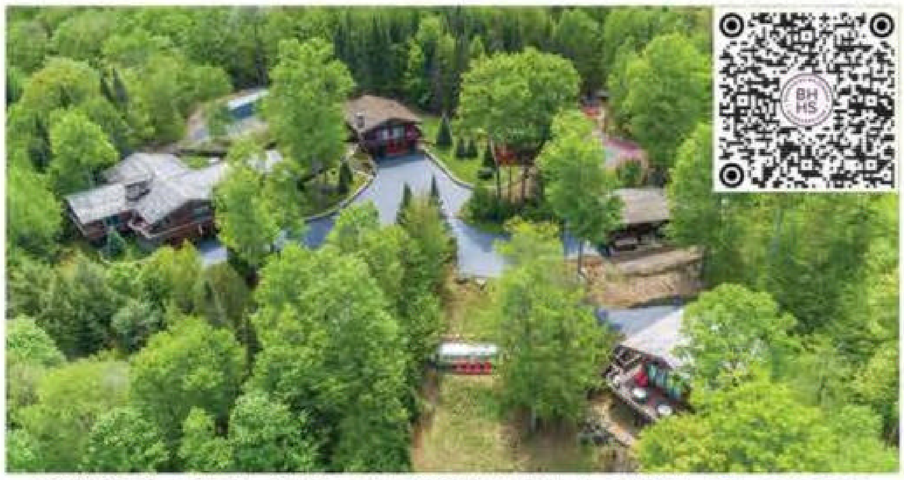

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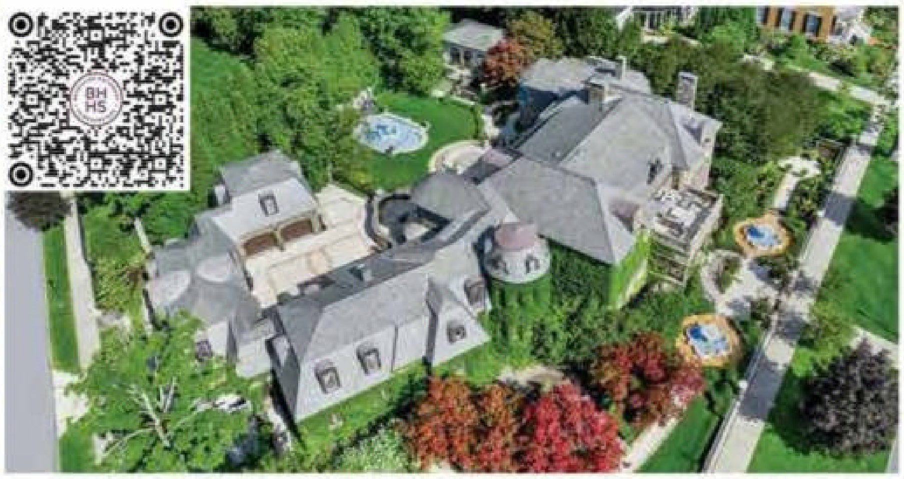

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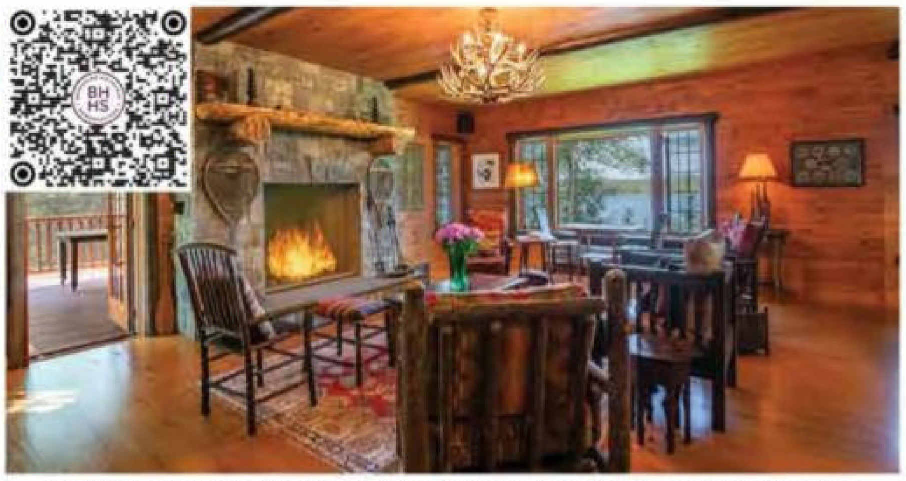

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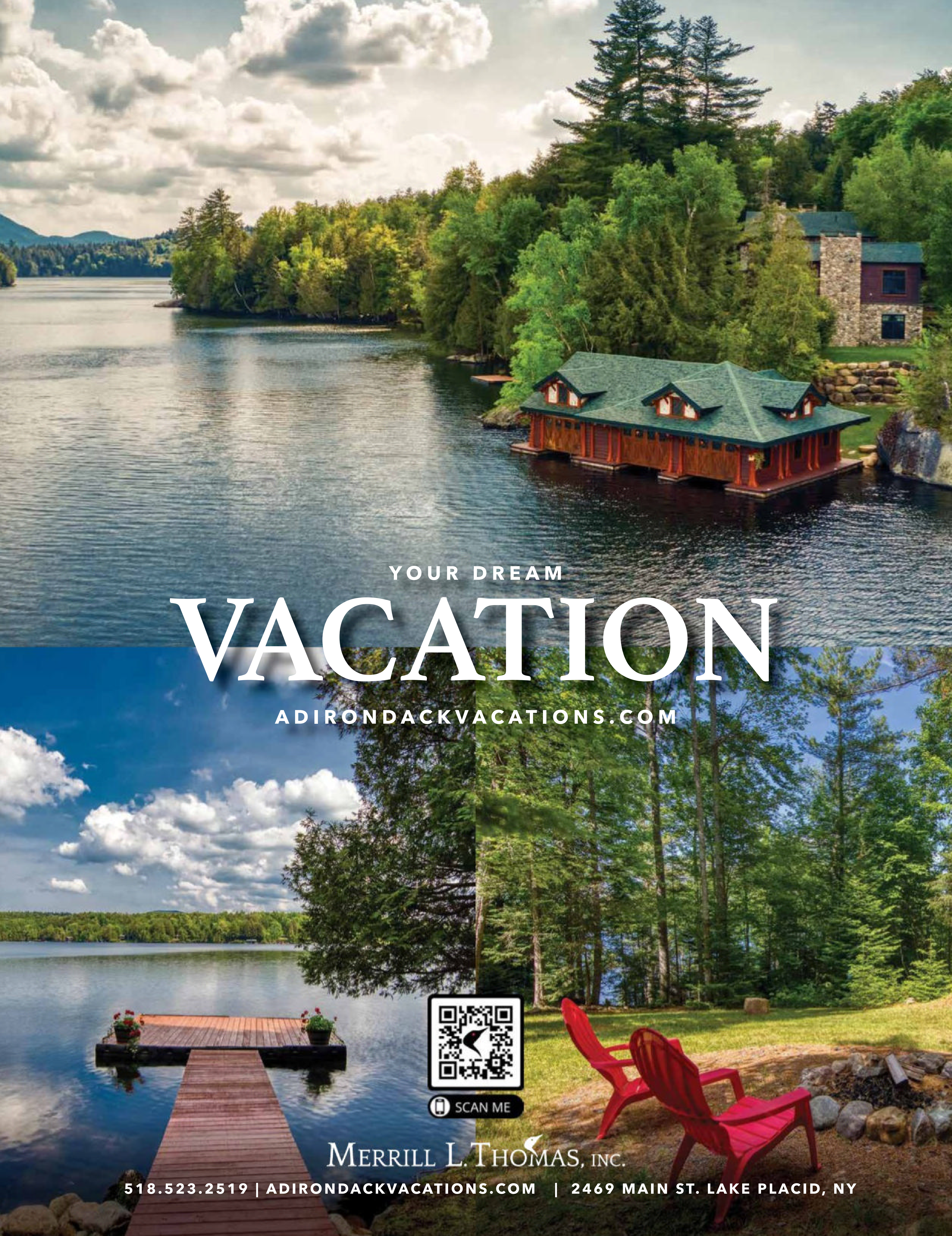
BACK PAGE

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM COURTNEY MANOR (PORCUPINE), ANNE SANDER (BLACK BEAR), BEV STELLGES (RACCOONS) AND JEFF NADLER (MOOSE)

Trail cams are the ultimate for natural-world voyeurs. They're a window into what happens in the Adirondack woods when the sun goes down, capturing roving raccoon gangs, lumbering porcupines, mother moose love and—the indignity!—an *Ursus americanus* scratching its back (or more likely, marking a tree).

Some folks use the cameras to track monster bucks. Others rely on them to monitor private land. But what we hear from most people, like the *Adirondack Life* readers who sent us the above shots, is that trail cams are a fun, nonintrusive way to get to know their wild neighbors. Anne Sander, whose camera in Piercefield caught the bear with the itchy back, says, "I just about fell out of my chair when I downloaded the pictures. They felt like a gift."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